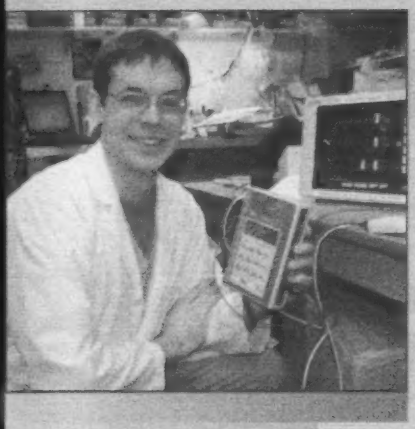
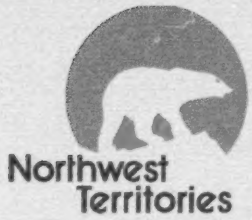
TOWARDS LITERACY:

A STRATEGY FRAMEWORK – 2008-2018



Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment



Kīspin ki nitawihtīn ā nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwēsinēn.

Cree

ʔerihtł'ís dëne súłiné yati t'a huts'elkër xa beyéyati theʔa ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ën yółti.

Chipewyan

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English

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Français

Jii gwandak izhii ginjìk vat'atr'ijąhch'uu zhìt yinohthan jì', diits'àt ginohknìi.

Gwich'in

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

ᑕᒃᓂᐊ ᑎᑎᖅᑲᓪ ᐱᓕᒍᕕᒋᑦ ᐃᓄᒃᑎᑐᖅᓯᒪᓕᕆᔨᒃ, ᐅᑭᑦᑎᓐᓄᑦ ᐅᖅᑲᓗ ᕿᓐᓄᖅᑐᑎᑦ.

Inuktitut

UVANITTUAQ ILITCHURISUKUPKU INUVIALUKTUN, QUQUAQLUTA.

Inuvialuktun

K'éhshó got'ıne xədǝ́ k'é hederi ʔedıhtl'é yeriniwę nídé dúle.

North Slavey

Edi gondı dehgéh got'ıe zhatié k'ǫ́ǫ́ edatł'éh enahddhę nide.

South Slavey

Tłıchǫ yati k'ǫ̀ǫ̀ dè wegodìı wek'èhoızǫ nǫ̀ǫwǫ dè, gots'ǫ̀ goahde.

Tłıchǫ

Cover photo credit:
Far Right – Rhonda Kennedy

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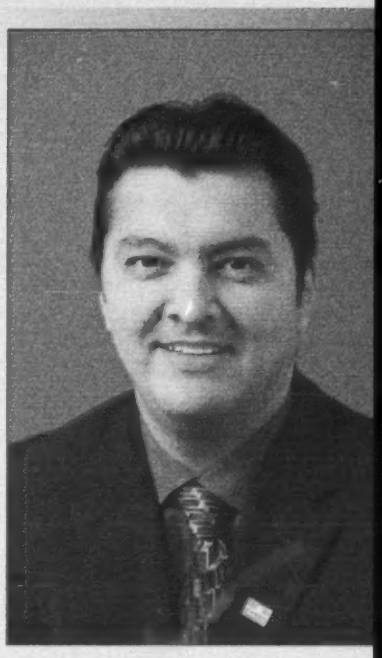
A Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018 on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The renewed NWT Literacy Strategy builds upon the accomplishments of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005. Literacy is an issue that affects the lives of every NWT resident. Good literacy skills provide many benefits that enrich the quality of our lives.

The Literacy Strategy encompasses a full range of literacy programs and services as well as partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations. Recognizing literacy development as a lifelong process that runs throughout people's lives, the Literacy Strategy addresses the needs of NWT citizens from early childhood to the senior years in their roles as learners, family members and active, productive citizens.

The Literacy Strategy presents a vision of literacy in the NWT where everyone can read and write and participate fully in society. We all have a role to play in developing a literate society. Individuals have a responsibility to develop the skills required for success in everyday life, and parents have a responsibility to support their children's literacy development. The NWT Literacy Strategy is the GNWT's commitment to make that task easier for individuals and families by delivering effective programs and services that support literacy development throughout life.

Honourable Jackson Lafferty
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment

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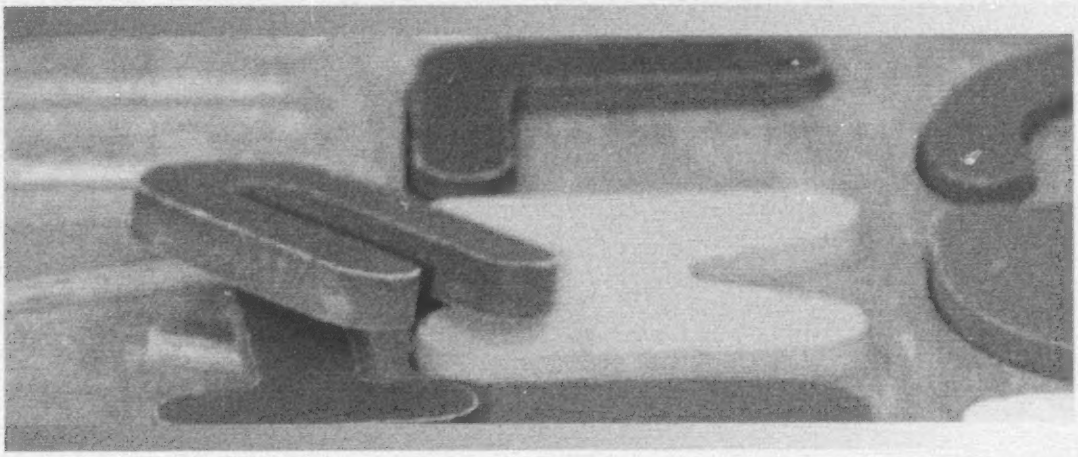
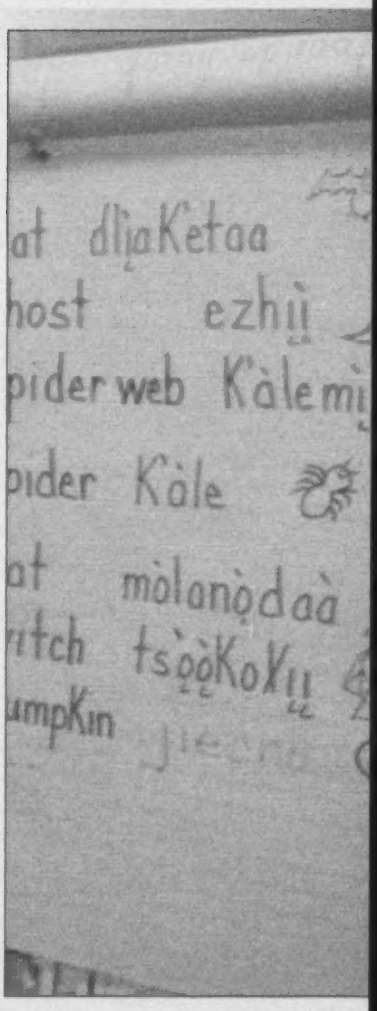
INTRODUCTION



Rhonda Kennedy

Preface

The Northwest Territories (NWT) has undergone many changes within the past 10 years, and we can expect more changes in the next decade. Aboriginal land claims and self-government agreements are changing the NWT social and political landscape. Economic expansion in mining and oil and gas industries is increasing the demand for skilled labour and will continue to create new job opportunities for NWT residents. During this time of rapid change, it is important that all NWT residents are able to access the opportunities and benefit from the prosperity brought about by development of our abundant resources.



Literacy is of paramount importance because many NWT residents lack the basic skills to fill the jobs that are being created or meet the entrance requirements of job-specific training programs. Of particular concern is the fact that 70% of NWT Aboriginal adults lack the literacy skills to fully participate in 21st century society, compared to 30% of non-Aboriginals. Literacy is as much a social justice issue in the Northwest Territories as it is a labour market issue. Effective literacy initiatives are crucial for the evolution of an equitable NWT society where all residents are able to access new opportunities and benefit from the prosperity in our region.

Literacy skills are the essential building blocks for the development of a vibrant NWT society and economy. Literacy is a continuum of skill development, ranging from learning to read to performing a complex set of skills. Today, the broad definition of literacy includes reading text, document use, writing, oral communications, numeracy, thinking skills, computer use, working with others and continuous learning. These foundational skills are used in the home, school, community and workplace. Increased literacy skill levels will enable all people in the NWT to be healthy, self-reliant individuals with an improved quality of life.

Linking Plans and Strategies

The second NWT Literacy Strategy builds upon Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 by describing how the Government of the Northwest Territories intends to work towards attaining our vision of a society in which all people can participate fully as citizens. Literacy is valued as a lifelong learning process necessary for personal, social, political and economic development.

The members of the 16th NWT Legislative Assembly have committed the Government of the Northwest Territories to doing its part to improve the quality of life for people of the NWT. Northerners Working Together, the vision, goals and priorities of the current Government of the Northwest Territories, has identified six goals:

- A strong and independent North built on partnerships;
- An environment that will sustain present and future generations;
- Healthy, educated people;
- A diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities and choices;
- Sustainable, vibrant, safe communities; and
- Effective and efficient government.

"literacy is valued as a lifelong learning process necessary for personal, social, political and economic development"

The success of the Literacy Strategy is also linked to other GNWT strategies, plans and directives. Together, all of these important strategies lay the foundation for a unified approach to reach our goal of a strong, healthy and prosperous Northwest Territories.

- Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive
- Aboriginal Language Strategy
- Early Childhood Development Framework for Action
- Income Security Framework
- Career Development Directive
- Labour Force Development Plan 2002-2007
- The Seniors Action Plan 2002-2003 – A Response to the Review of Seniors Programs and Services
- NWT Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities
- Disability Framework and Action Plan
- Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories
- Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling
- Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education Directive

Literacy Strategy Background

In 2000, Lutra Associates completed Making a Case for Literacy: The State of Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education, a study on adult literacy commissioned by the NWT Literacy Council. The statistics from the Lutra report, based upon self-reported grade levels from census data, revealed that a significant proportion of the NWT population, especially Aboriginal adults, had serious literacy challenges. The Lutra report also documented the impact of literacy on job opportunities, poverty, health, children, the justice system and community participation.

In response to the Lutra report, in July 2000, the NWT Legislative Assembly passed Motion 6-14(3), recommending the development of an NWT Literacy Strategy. The NWT Literacy Strategy document, Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005, was subsequently prepared. In January 2001, Cabinet approved the NWT Literacy Strategy, along with the allocation of $2.4 million of annual funding for literacy initiatives. A variety of literacy programs has been funded through the Literacy Strategy since 2001.

New data from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), which measured actual skill levels, revealed significant literacy problems in the NWT, especially amongst NWT Aboriginal adults. 70% of NWT Aboriginal adults are below IALSS Level 3, the international standard for functional literacy. There is a continued need for a NWT Literacy Strategy and for dedicated funding for literacy initiatives.

In 2007, the NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation evaluated the first five years of Literacy Strategy programming. Research for the summative evaluation included extensive consultation with individuals and organizations involved in implementation of the Literacy Strategy as well as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and 10 community consultations. Data collection also included review of program documents and statistics.

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation identified key successes and challenges of the 2000 Literacy Strategy.

NWT Literacy Strategy successes:

- Increased awareness of literacy throughout the NWT;
- Increased partnerships and networking;
- Investment of $2.4 million annually into literacy programming;
- Increased evaluation and reporting;
- IALSS data; and
- Expansion of the concept of literacy beyond just reading and writing.

NWT Literacy Strategy challenges:

- Need for long-term solutions;
- Duplication with other GNWT strategies;
- Lack of baseline data at the beginning of the Strategy;
- Data collection and reporting problems;
- Insufficient financial and human resources;
- Staff turnover;
- Lack of multi-year funding at the project level; and
- Inconsistent communication.

ECE drafted a detailed report that cross-referenced IALSS findings with the goals, objectives and actions of the 2000 Literacy Strategy. The new NWT Literacy Strategy has been informed by IALSS data and research from the Literacy Strategy summative evaluation.

ECE established a multi-stakeholder working group, comprised of staff from ECE and other GNWT departments, Aurora College, NWT Literacy Council, non-governmental literacy service providers and Aboriginal organizations, to guide the renewal of the NWT Literacy Strategy. The Literacy Strategy renewal process builds upon the accomplishments of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 and anticipates a continued legacy of effective literacy programming in the NWT.

NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation Recommendations

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation: Summary Report (2007) made a number of recommendations that will help guide NWT Literacy Strategy renewal for 2008-2018.

Recommendation #1:

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework 2001-2005 addressed the past five fiscal years and it is now appropriate to update that Strategy to reflect current needs and new political realities. An update of the Strategy should focus on the results gathered through the NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation effort, as well as the valuable information identified through the NWT's participation in the 2003 IALSS[1]. Updating the Strategy will ensure that measures developed specific to adult literacy will build from the baseline data generated by the IALSS and address the lessons learned over the first five years of the Strategy's implementation.

Recommendation #2:

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation effort identifies a clear need to dedicate funding for a full-time GNWT Literacy Strategy Coordinator. This Coordinator must be in place to oversee Literacy Strategy activities, and should be in addition to the dedicated funding for a full-time ALBE[2] Coordinator.

Recommendation #3:

Ensure that the next version of the GNWT Literacy Strategy takes a more targeted approach. The Strategy should focus on making significant positive accomplishments in a few key areas, rather than spreading resources thinly across a wide spectrum of activities.

[1] International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.

[2] Adult Literacy and Basic Education.

Recommendation #4:

Ensure that the goals and objectives of the new GNWT Literacy Strategy are designed realistically. These goals and objectives must be measurable, not administratively burdensome to collect for, and reflect true reporting accountabilities. Evaluation expertise should be used in the development of these goals and objectives. As well, the Strategy should only contain activities that are funded (i.e. no interlinking strategies or initiatives should be included).

Recommendation #5:

Adopt a multi-year funding approach for the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy – one that filters down to the project/program level so that they reap the benefits of longer term planning and consistency. This multi-year approach will also signify to key stakeholders that addressing literacy needs cannot be accomplished through short-term or quick fixes.

Recommendation #6:

Data collection systems must reflect and address the issues caused by multiple partners spread across a decentralized system. To mitigate these issues, ensure that a new evaluation framework (or RMAF[3]) is designed and properly implemented for the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy, and that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding data collection and reporting. In doing so, formal data collection and reporting requirements should be implemented where none currently exist, and those systems where the data is being collected and not used should be streamlined. Ideally, the data that is collected should be synthesized and analyzed on an annual basis (i.e. an annual report) to ensure that Strategy activities stay on target.

[3] Results-based Management Accountability Framework.

Recommendation #7:

Design and implement a new communications plan that supports the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy. In doing so, develop orientation materials and back-up plans, which can be used to address the turnover of personnel within Strategy key areas. Communication must also be ongoing and consistent amongst all key stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the entire Strategy.

Recommendation #8:

Ensure that Literacy Strategy partners play an active role in the design and delivery of the renewal Strategy in order to solicit their buy-in. These partners must have formalized decision-making roles and responsibilities that will impact the implementation and direction of the Strategy.

International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey

Conducted in 2003, the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) provides direct measures of adult literacy skills and data on a range of labour market-related skills. Previous data, including that used for the 2000 Literacy Strategy, was based on a proxy indicator, using educational attainment of grade nine or less as a benchmark for low literacy. For the first time, the NWT has accurate information on actual skill levels of adults, 16 and above.

IALSS Reports

- Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. International comparative report (May 2005).
- Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. National comparative report (November 2005).
- Building on Our Competencies: The Northwest Territories Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. NWT report (April 2006).

IALSS Skills Domains

The IALSS definition of literacy accentuates the modern conception of literacy as a continuum of skill development with diverse applications:

> Literacy is using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.[4]

Tessa Macintosh

[4] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 55.

IALSS measured proficiencies in four skill domains:

Prose literacy – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts, such as editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

Document literacy – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including applications, forms, schedules, maps, tables and charts.

Numeracy – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

Problem solving – goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist.

IALSS Skill Levels

IALSS measures skill levels on a 500-point scale. Prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy are grouped into five proficiency levels; problem solving has four proficiency levels. Tasks on the IALSS testing instrument were graded based on a number of mental operations pertaining to using printed information: type of information match, type of information requested, plausibility of distractors and number of information sources. IALSS Level 3 is considered the international standard for functional literacy in the modern knowledge economy:

> This level [IALSS Level 3] is the minimum for persons to understand and use information contained in the increasingly difficult texts and tasks that characterize the emerging knowledge society and information economy.[5]

[5] Learning a living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. (2005). p. 35

Table 1: IALSS Prose Literacy Difficulty Levels

Level 1	0 - 225	Locate a single piece of information in a short text.
Level 2	226 - 275	Locate a single piece of information in a text with some low-level inferences; may have to compare easily identifiable information.
Level 3	276 - 325	Integrate information from dense or more lengthy texts; generate a response based on easily identifiable information.
Level 4	326 - 375	Perform multiple-feature information matches and synthesize information from complex lengthy texts, using complex inferences.
Level 5	376 - 500	Search for information in dense text; make high-level inferences and use specialized background knowledge

Table 2: IALSS Document Literacy Difficulty Levels

Level 1	0 - 225	Locate a single piece of information based on a literal match; enter one piece of information based on personal knowledge.
Level 2	226 - 275	Match a single piece of information, using low-level inferences; may have to examine various parts of a document for information.
Level 3	276 - 325	Integrate multiple pieces of information from one or more documents; examine complex tables or graphs, which contain some irrelevant information.
Level 4	326 - 375	Perform multiple-feature information matches; cycle through documents to integrate information, using a high degree of inference; provide numerous responses without designation as to how many responses are needed.
Level 5	376 - 500	Search through complex displays that contain multiple plausible distractors; make high-level inferences; use specialized knowledge.

Table 3: IALSS Numeracy Difficulty Levels

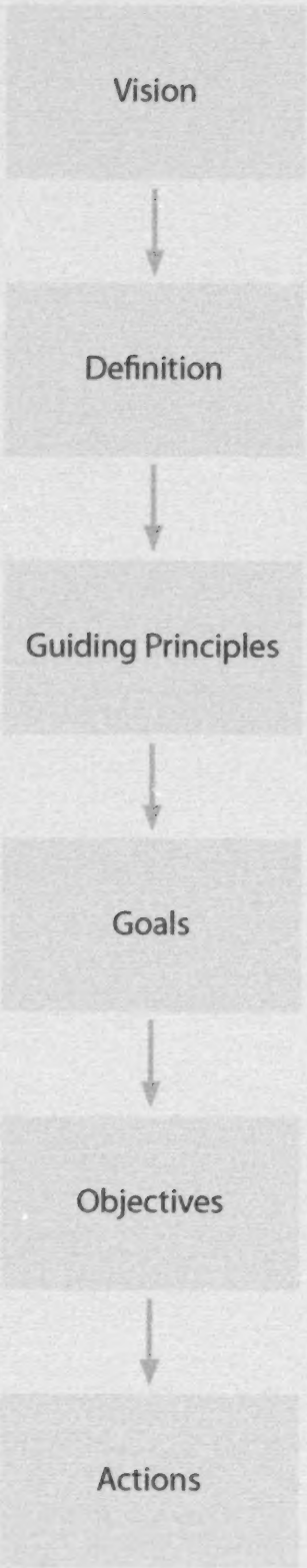
Level 1	0 - 225	Show understanding of basic numerical ideas by completing simple, concrete tasks in a familiar context. Tasks involve counting, sorting dates, performing simple arithmetic operations.
Level 2	226 - 275	Understand basic mathematical concepts in familiar contexts where mathematical content is visual and quite explicit. Tasks involve estimations with whole numbers, benchmark fractions and percents, performing simple measurements.
Level 3	276 - 325	Demonstrate understanding of mathematical information represented in a range of different forms, such as numbers, symbols, maps, graphs, texts and drawings. Skills required involve number and spatial sense; knowledge of mathematical patterns; the ability to interpret proportions, data and statistics embedded in relatively simple texts; undertaking a number of processes to solve problems.
Level 4	326 - 375	Understand a broad range of abstract mathematical information represented in diverse ways, including texts of increasing complexity and unfamiliar contexts. Tasks involve undertaking multiple steps to find solutions to problems, more complex reasoning, working with proportions and formulas and offering explanations for answers.
Level 5	376 - 500	Understand complex representations and abstract mathematical and statistical ideas, which are embedded in complex texts. Tasks involve integrating multiple types of mathematical information, drawing inferences and generating mathematical justification for answers.

Table 4: IALSS Problem Solving Difficulty Levels

Level 1	0 - 250	Concrete tasks, simple inferences based on limited information in a familiar context.
Level 2	251 - 300	Evaluating alternatives, using a step-by-step linear process; some combining information from different sources.
Level 3	301 - 350	Ordering objects according to a given set of criteria; constructing solutions in non-linear manner; dealing with multi-dimensional goals.
Level 4	351 - 500	Judging multiple evaluation criteria which have to be inferred from information; taking into account an entire system of problem solving states and possible solutions.

NWT LITERACY
AT A GLANCE

Tessa Macintosh


Vision
Definition
Guiding Principles
Goals
Objectives
Actions

Literacy Vision

Our vision for the Northwest Territories is of a society where

- all people can read and write;
- all people can actively participate fully as citizens;
- literacy is valued as a lifelong learning process necessary for personal, social, political and economic development; and
- people value literacy in all official languages of the NWT.

Our vision builds upon Northerners Working Together, the 16th Assembly of Government of the Northwest Territories' vision, goals and priorities. The NWT Literacy Strategy vision strongly supports the vision outlined in Northerners Working Together:

> Strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories.

Tessa Macintosh

Literacy Definition

There are many definitions of literacy available in today's world, most of which focus narrowly on understanding printed material. In the Northwest Territories, literacy is a pluralistic concept, which is linked to language, social context and cultural identity. Literacy encompasses a broad range of competencies: reading different kinds of printed materials, writing, speaking, listening, observation, visual representation, numeracy, use of technology, critical thinking and problem solving. Development of these multiple literacies is encouraged in the 11 official languages of the Northwest Territories. Literacy is a continuum of lifelong skill development in which there is always room for growth and the risk of decline if skills are not used.

NWT Literacy Strategy Definition of Literacy

Literacy is
the lifelong development
of a broad range of skills
in one or more of the NWT official languages
for the purpose of expanding an individual's potential
for optimal health, personal success
and positive participation in community wellness and development.

Literacy Skills	
Reading printed materials	Numeracy
Writing	Speaking
Listening	Observation
Visual representation	Use of technology
Critical thinking	Problem solving

Literacy Strategy Guiding Principles

Literacy permeates every aspect of society and has a profound impact on the quality of people's lives. In today's society, skill demands are constantly increasing. The polarized concept of people being either "literate" or "illiterate" is now outdated. Literacy is not so much a matter of whether people can read or not, but rather a matter of how well they can read and use different kinds of information. The guiding principles of the NWT Literacy Strategy reflect the modern concept of literacy as a lifelong process, involving a wide range of skills.

1. Literacy is important for people of all ages.
2. Literacy is a continuum of lifelong skill development.
3. Literacy encompasses a wide range of skills, including reading, writing, numeracy, oral communications, problem solving and computer use.
4. Literacy is a key determinant of the health and well-being of individuals and families.
5. Literacy is a foundation for all learning.
6. Literacy initiatives are most effective when they are implemented through active cross-society partnerships.
7. Literacy programs should be supported in all official languages of the Northwest Territories.
8. Methods and resources of literacy programs should be relevant to the needs, goals and cultures of the learners and the community.

"literacy is not so much a matter of whether people can read or not, but rather a matter of how well they can read and use different kinds of information"

Literacy Strategy
Goals, Objectives and Actions

The NWT Literacy Strategy is intended to provide a framework for a broad range of activities that will occur over the next ten-year period. Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018 builds upon the successes of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005. Research from the NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation and the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) has also informed the framework.

The NWT Literacy Strategy includes the following four goals:

Goal 1: Increase the literacy levels of people of all ages in the NWT.

Goal 2: Support literacy in the official languages of the NWT.

Goal 3: Build integrated partnerships across the NWT to address literacy priorities.

Goal 4: Build community capacity to meet local literacy needs.

A series of objectives and actions has been developed to address each goal. The objectives and actions provide a framework, which allows progress to be measured over time. The specific objectives and actions of each goal are listed on the following tables.

Goal 1: Increase the literacy levels of people of all ages in the NWT.

1.1 Early Childhood	
Objectives	Actions
1.1.1 Ensure early literacy development and family literacy training and supports are available to community-based family support programs.	1. Deliver ongoing community-based family literacy training for staff and/or volunteers in early childhood programs, family support programs and other community organizations that support families. 2. Ensure early literacy development is a strong component in early childhood education programs.
1.1.2 Promote the use of Aboriginal culture, language and literacy within early childhood programs.	1. Expand the Language Nest initiative in NWT communities. 2. Standardize training for Language Nest personnel. 3. Develop early childhood Aboriginal language educational resources.
1.1.3 Increase opportunities for families with young children to participate in family literacy activities in every NWT community.	1. Provide funding to community-based groups to support quality family literacy activities. 2. Continue to provide support to community-based family literacy projects to provide culturally appropriate materials and outreach services. 3. Develop community literacy partnerships to support family literacy in every community of the NWT.

1.1.4	Keep families and communities well informed, and promote the importance and benefits of early literacy development in all official languages.	1. Continue to develop appropriate strategies and materials to promote the importance and benefits of family literacy to NWT families. 2. Distribute family literacy promotional materials throughout the NWT.
1.2	School Age Children (K to 12)	
Objectives		Actions
1.2.1	Provide support for literacy development in the K-12 school system.	1. Support students' literacy development through school-based Literacy/Numeracy Coaches. 2. Staff school libraries to support student literacy.
1.2.2	Expand family literacy initiatives to include school age children and their families.	1. Support DEAs/DECs to develop literacy programs which include school age children and families.
1.3	Youth (16 to 25)	
Objectives		Actions
1.3.1	Provide alternative approaches to support literacy development for out-of-school youth.	1. Implement alternative programs for out-of-school youth. 2. Implement bridging programs for out-of-school youth to transition into the workplace. 3. Develop literacy resources that appeal to out-of-school youth.
1.3.2	Provide literacy supports for out-of-school youth through community partnerships.	1. Partner with youth centres and programs to include a literacy component. 2. Provide transitional support for youth in correctional facilities to develop literacy skills. 3. Provide transitional support for young parents to develop literacy skills.

1.4 Working Age Adults (16 to 59)	
Objectives	Actions
1.4.1 Develop an integrated approach to adult literacy programming, which includes a broad range of support for learners.	1. Research learning barriers and academic success factors. 2. Develop and implement interventions to support adult learners based on research findings. 3. Research non-academic outcomes of adult learners. 4. Incorporate prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) into adult literacy programming to validate learners' knowledge and skills. 5. Provide individual tutoring support for emergent literacy adults. 6. Provide learning support for adults with disabilities.
1.4.2 Implement innovative approaches to adult literacy programming.	1. Research linkages between workplace competencies and adult literacy programming. 2. Increase learning opportunities through distance education and educational software. 3. Develop and implement embedded literacy programs.
1.4.3 Increase support for adult literacy practitioners.	1. Deliver annual professional development opportunities for adult educators and ALBE instructors. 2. Develop relevant instructional resources to support the delivery of adult literacy programs.

1.4.4 Ensure standardization of ALBE programs in the NWT.	1. Implement NWT Senior Secondary School Diploma for Adults. 2. Develop an ALBE curriculum placement package. 3. Conduct regular revisions of ALBE curricula to keep abreast of evolving skill demands. 4. Develop learner assessment instruments for ALBE courses.
1.4.5 Increase awareness of and support for workplace literacy and essential skills programs.	1. Explore the nature and feasibility of workplace essential skills curricula based on industry needs. 2. Establish a recognizable workplace essential skills credential. 3. Promote and support the delivery of workplace literacy programs. 4. Collaborate with stakeholders to identify incentives for work release and on-the-job training programs.
1.5 Elders/Seniors (60+)	
Objectives	Actions
1.5.1 Ensure elders/seniors have access to a continuum of literacy supports that enables them to function independently.	1. Develop a continuum of literacy supports based on seniors' literacy research. 2. Develop literacy supports that address health and quality of life.

Goal 2: Support literacy in the official languages of the NWT.

2.1 Language Acquisition in Aboriginal Languages	
Objectives	Actions
2.1.1 Support family literacy in the Aboriginal languages.	1. Conduct a literature review on language acquisition in Aboriginal languages. 2. Interview elders and community members on traditional language training. 3. Develop a parent guide to support and encourage Aboriginal language in the home. 4. Promote traditional learning opportunities to support family literacy in all Aboriginal languages.
2.2 Aboriginal Language Resources	
Objectives	Actions
2.2.1 Develop resources in the Aboriginal languages.	1. Make the Aboriginal language fonts readily available throughout the NWT. 2. Provide training on the use of Aboriginal language fonts.
2.2.2 Support language communities in the preservation of traditional stories and knowledge.	1. Provide training and resources for transcribing, translating and archiving traditional stories and knowledge.
2.3 Community Aboriginal Language Support	
Objectives	Actions
2.3.1 Provide progressive language training in NWT communities.	1. Provide Aboriginal language literacy programs in NWT communities. 2. Provide methodology language training in NWT communities. 3. Increase professional development supports for community language teachers.

Goal 3: Build integrated partnerships across the NWT to address literacy priorities.

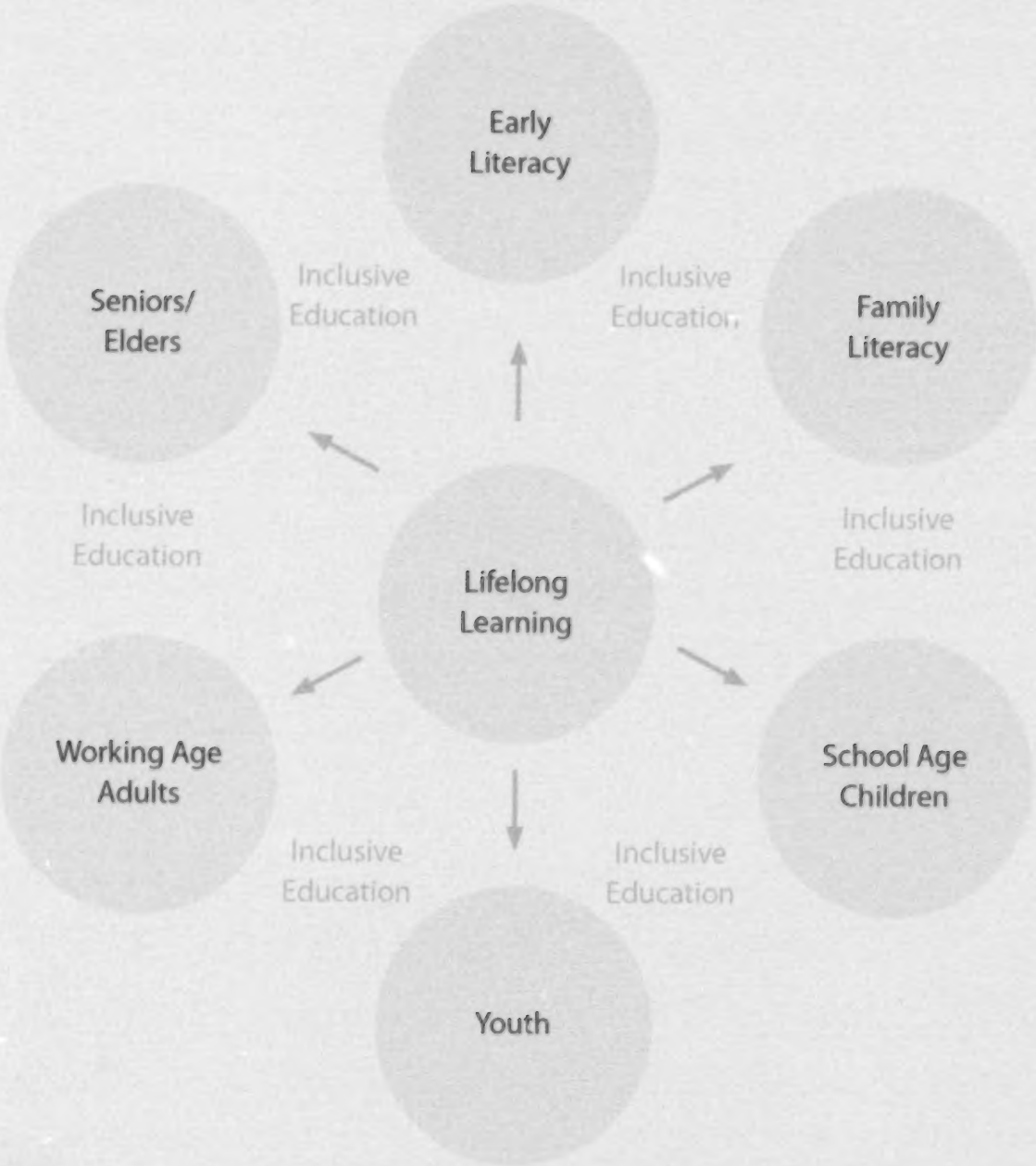
Objectives		Actions
3.1	Support literacy partnerships among GNWT departments and external stakeholders.	1. Establish a NWT Literacy Strategy Advisory Committee. 2. Implement a Literacy Strategy communications plan to report on literacy activities across GNWT departments and with external stakeholders.
3.2	Promote the integrated use of literacy resources among stakeholders.	1. Establish an action plan to maximize resources available to support literacy programs and services. 2. Develop resources to address health literacy issues.

Goal 4: Build community capacity to meet local literacy needs.

Objectives		Actions
4.1	Support community groups to develop and implement community literacy plans.	1. Provide expertise and training to enable communities to develop literacy plans. 2. Provide communities with literacy programming materials to implement their literacy plans.
4.2	Increase access to community library services.	1. Increase library services for communities without libraries. 2. Provide community libraries with the necessary resources to expand their literacy programming.

LITERACY
ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

Tessa Macintosh


Early Literacy
Family Literacy
School Age Children
Youth
Working Age Adults
Seniors/ Elders
Lifelong Learning
Inclusive Education
Inclusive Education
Inclusive Education
Inclusive Education
Inclusive Education
Inclusive Education

Lifelong Learning

Education is sometimes viewed as the preparation of youth to enter the work world with basic skills. The concept that people can gain all the skills they need when they are young and be set for life is outdated. The Canadian labour market is shifting towards knowledge- and technology-intensive occupations. Continuous upskilling and learning across the lifespan are necessary to keep abreast of the 21st century knowledge economy.

In modern society, individuals' skills must continually evolve and adapt to new information and ways of doing things. Rapid changes in technology and expansion of knowledge are driving an increase in skill demands. What was considered an adequate level of skill 10 years ago is found lacking today. Because technological change is likely to continue, we can anticipate that the skills of today will not be sufficient 10 years in the future. Lifelong learning is essential to keep up with the pace of change.

Historically, educational programs adopted an encyclopedic approach in which learners were expected to memorize content and demonstrate knowledge. With the advent of the Internet and the explosion of information, the focus of education has shifted to developing information-processing skills. People need to know how to locate, sort and compile information from a variety of sources and in a variety of forms.

"In modern society, individuals' skills must continually evolve and adapt to new information and ways of doing things."

It is important for NWT residents to value learning in all aspects their lives, especially as society continues to change. Lifelong learning opportunities come in a range of formal and non-formal educational settings. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1996) defines lifelong learning in terms of the full scope of human activities:

> This view of learning embraces individual and social development of all kinds in all settings – formally, in schools, vocational, tertiary and adult education institutions, and non-formally, at home, at work and in the community.[6]

Lifelong learning benefits individuals, communities and societies. Lifelong literacy increases the ability of NWT residents of all ages to adapt to continuous change and increased skill demands.

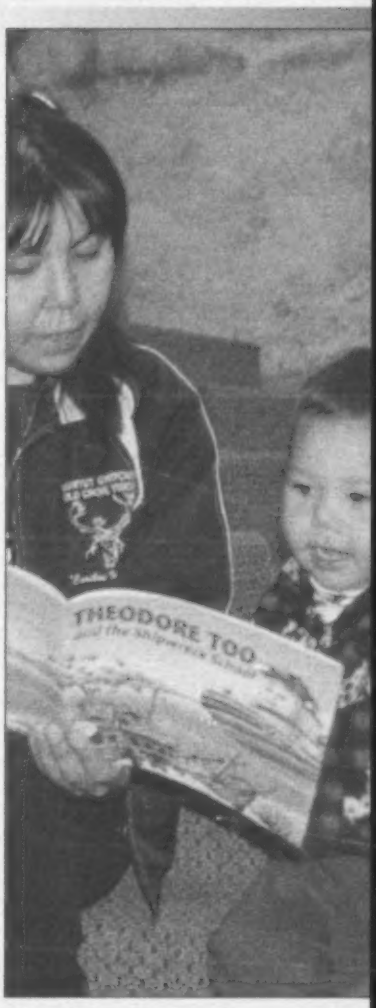
[6] OECD. (1996). Lifelong learning for all. p. 15.

Early Literacy

Research shows that the experiences and activities of children in their first five years affect them for the rest of their lives. During this time, physical, cognitive, emotional, social, language and communication skills develop naturally when children live in a supportive and encouraging environment. For most children, home is their first centre of learning; parents and family members are their first teachers. From birth, identity, culture, values and ways of understanding the world are passed on to them through language.

Learning Environment

In order for children to have the maximum benefit within their early years, it is critical that parents and communities provide the best environment possible. Within the home, parents can provide natural, interactive ways of helping their children develop language skills. Constantly speaking to children, telling them stories, singing, playing rhyming games and including them in everyday experiences with family members are all natural activities that do not require any special resources and can be part of the life of every family. Common printed materials, such as newspapers, comics, catalogues, calendars and storybooks, can serve as reading material to stimulate an interest in reading. These activities can extend outside the home to include reading signs, maps and menus in restaurants. In fact, there is no limit to the learning opportunities that present themselves every day for parents and young children.



Children have the natural ability to learn languages in their early years. Providing children with a foundation in the local Aboriginal language and culture increases their self-confidence throughout their lives. NWT early childhood programs that are rooted in the local language and culture provide such learning opportunities for children. Teaching children their language and culture in the early years supports the survival of the languages and cultural traditions within the community.

Tessa Macintosh

Early Learning

Many children, between birth and five, experience learning beyond the home in early childhood programs. These programs may take on a variety of forms. One of the common factors for success must be a program focused on the development of strong language skills in the language or languages of the community. An effective program offers rich language learning opportunities through informal activities and is staffed by trained early childhood educators who understand their role in early literacy development. Staff must model good language use in all their interactions with the children and ensure that a wide range of activities incorporates language development. Along with the developmental role, early childhood educators are in a position to identify children who need additional support and, when appropriate, connect with support services and share information with the school assisting the child's transition to kindergarten.

In order for NWT early childhood programs to be effective, they must reflect the culture of the children who attend. This can be achieved primarily by employing staff that are from the same culture as the children, as well as through the values that are modelled, the activities that children participate in and the way their environment is organized and arranged. Regular visits by elders, family and community members provide the children with important connections to the wider world outside their program. In some NWT communities, Language Nests provide Aboriginal language immersion within the early childhood program.

"experience learning beyond the home"

Stages of Development

Early childhood learning and development are dependent on a strong foundation that involves a number of interconnected factors. Since a child's development occurs in stages at optimum ages, it is important to provide the best conditions and supports necessary to avoid missing these critical learning opportunities.

The Canadian Council on Learning (2007) uses five indicators for early childhood development: birth weight, physical development and movement, cognitive development, language and communications skills, and emotional and social development. Indicators provide insight into how children are developing and where extra support may be required. For example, low birth weight is often an indicator of poor prenatal nutrition and unhealthy behaviours during the prenatal period. Low birth weight can be associated with lower cognitive development in school age children.

Providing information early in a child's development allows required supports to be in place as early as possible. Therefore, it is important to consider the stages and indicators of development when providing appropriate programs and services for young children. Additional factors of influence in child development are the type and availability of early childhood programs as well as resources and services that support families in their role of raising healthy, balanced preschoolers.

Rhonda Kennedy

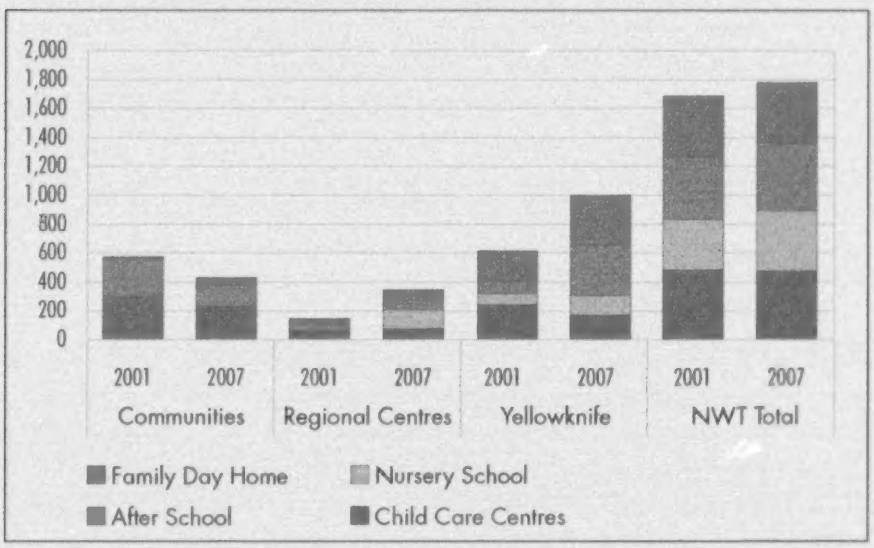
"support families in their role of raising healthy, balanced preschoolers"

What We Know

In 2005, the population of Northwest Territories children between the age of zero and four was 3,342 or 8 percent of the total population, which is a decrease since 2001 when children in the same age group totaled 3,618 or 9 percent.[7] Since 1997, the GNWT and the Canadian government have significantly increased funding for early childhood development programs.

One of the positive impacts is an increase in licensed child care programs in the Northwest Territories. A comparison of licensed early childhood programs in the NWT in 2001 and 2007 shows a 30 percent increase. In the same time period, the number of licensed early childhood spaces increased by 36 percent. This data indicates more early learning opportunities for young children in the NWT.

Figure 1: NWT Licensed Child Care Spaces, 2001 and 2007[8]

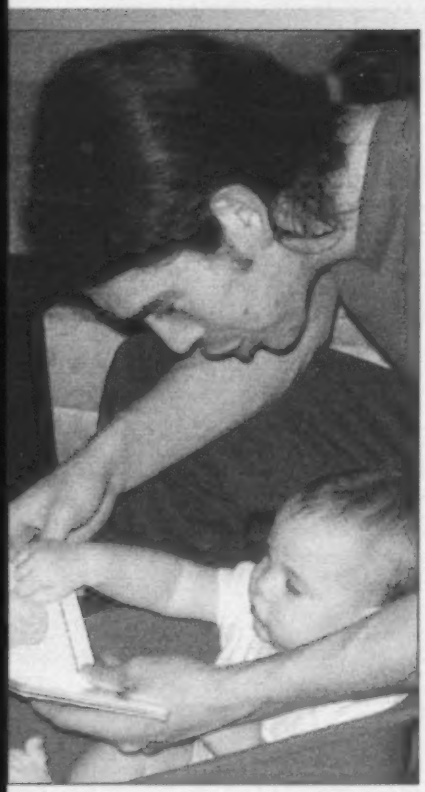


[7] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). Summary of NWT community statistics 2006.

[8] Source: Education, Culture and Employment. Education Operations and Development.

In 2001, the GNWT Departments of Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services jointly developed the Early Childhood Development Framework for Action to promote a comprehensive and integrated service delivery model approach to early childhood development programs and services. The goal is to ensure that all NWT children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The publication of the Framework document was followed by the identification of several specific activities to support communities, families and individuals. Child development, language, culture, and early and family literacy were the basis for investments and increased program delivery. A direct link between the Framework and the NWT Literacy Strategy is demonstrated through family literacy training and program development and the development of Aboriginal language immersion programs in existing early childhood centres. A number of early childhood objectives outlined in the NWT Literacy Strategy come from the development plans for these two initiatives. Fulfillment of early literacy objectives will support both the NWT Literacy Strategy and the Early Childhood Development Framework for Action.



Family Literacy

What is Family Literacy?

Family literacy is about parents, children and other family members learning together at home and in their community, taking advantage of the learning opportunities from everyday life.[9]

All definitions of family literacy reflect the belief that literacy is a lifelong, social-cultural practice, which "develops as a result of shared social experience."[10] Family literacy is not just about reading and writing, but includes a range of interactive activities and practices that are integrated into the daily life of the family and connect with the real life experiences of the participants.[11] These activities may include telling stories, doing on-the-land activities, singing songs and baking.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) (2004) definition of family literacy includes citizenship, cultural identity and socio-economic development as well as human rights and equity.[12]

Role of the Family

Literacy begins at birth. A child's experiences in the home, where family members have traditionally been the child's first teachers, shape literacy development. Parents need to have confidence in knowing that they are their children's first, best and most consistent teachers, and that what they do at home is critical for their children's development. The family's unique ways of knowing, doing and communicating guide parents and other family members as they pass on the knowledge, skills and values their children need to function effectively within their particular society. Literacy and learning practices are embedded in these ways of knowing, doing

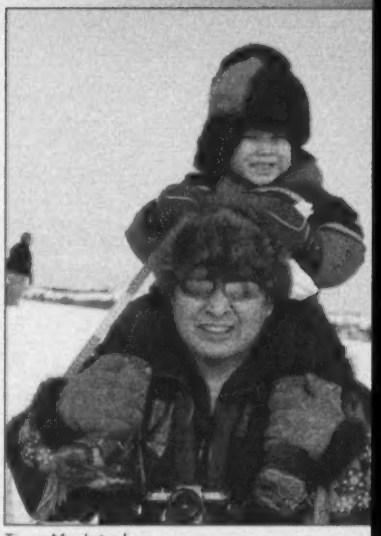
[9] NWT Literacy Council.

[10] Centre for Family Literacy. (2001). Foundational training manual for family literacy: Practitioner's guide. pp. 1-6.

[11] Auerbach, E.R. (1998). Toward a social-contextual approach to family literacy.

[12] UNESCO Education Sector. (2004). The plurality of literacy and its implications for policies and programmes.

and communicating; they are part of every social and cultural activity and every interaction. Language use, effective communication and the values attached to language and literacy vary among cultures. Families have an important role in ensuring their children are immersed in all aspects of their culture and language.


Tessa Macintosh

In the past, responsibility for teaching and learning was transferred from the family to professional teachers and education systems. This change broadened the education opportunities available to children; but in some cases, it created a disconnection in the development of the children and left families feeling inadequate and confused about their role. This was particularly true when the education system did not reflect the culture of the children.

Today's educators recognize the critical connection between home and school. However, many parents still find it difficult to communicate with teachers, schools and the education system, as they lack the necessary confidence to regain their rightful place in the education process.

Family literacy emphasizes the important role of family members in children's learning. When families provide a wide range of opportunities for parent-child interaction from birth, such as talking to, singing or reading with their children, they are incidentally and naturally teaching oral language and modelling literacy skills. Research shows that families frequently see literacy and education as the key to success for their children.

Family Literacy Programs

Families generally want what is best for their children.[13] In many cases, children provide a great source of motivation for families to become involved in family literacy because parents want a better life for their children. Family literacy programs provide support for

[13] Centre for Family Literacy. (2001). Foundational training manual for family literacy: Practitioners' guide.

the complex needs of families through a holistic and sustainable approach to family learning. Family literacy programs, which ideally involve the whole family, use informal learning to increase literacy levels of both children and parents.

Regardless of cultural, social, educational or economic status, families have valuable social and intellectual resources to offer their children.[14] The most effective programs build on family strengths and connections, within the context of the culture and community. This "strengths-based model" encourages an integrated, collaborative approach. Ideally, this kind of integration involves early childhood education, schools, adult literacy programs, health, employment and housing.

Considerable research supports the concept of a family literacy approach to literacy development where families are empowered to create their family literacy goals and share decision-making. Successful programs use a learner-centred approach that takes into account the unique cultural characteristics, gender, abilities and learning styles of the participants. This type of program, where learners are active participants in program development and part of the on-going assessment of the program, can be transformative.

To be successful, family literacy programs must have well-trained staff and must be located in easily accessible locations that are non-threatening and friendly. Many families will be able to attend only if the program is flexible and provides supports such as transportation and childcare. The most effective way of recruiting participants is through personal contact by someone the families feel they can trust. A community awareness drive can successfully attract potential learners and volunteers while also gaining support from other sectors of the community.

[14] International Reading Association. (2000). Excellent reading teacher: A position statement of the International Reading Association.

School-Age Literacy

Tessa Macintosh

Language is the foundation of all communication and our main tool for thought. It defines our culture and is a critical part of our identity that is essential for interpersonal relationships, life experiences and our role in society:[15] When children enter school, in order for literacy learning to be successful, it is critical that their learning connects with their own lived experience within their culture, family and community. From that point of personal strength and identity, they will be prepared to meet new learning opportunities with confidence and motivation. Literacy learning then progresses through incremental and spiraling stages that focus on, first, the operation of using language, second, the process of understanding context through language and, third, the ability to look critically at all forms of literacy.

The NWT English Language Arts Curriculum Framework (2006) describes its outcomes as designed to "...enhance students' opportunities to experience personal satisfaction and to become responsible, contributing citizens and lifelong learners."[16] This objective recognizes the necessity for school curricula to respond to the constant changes involving new literacies presented in new forms and also supports the evidence that a person's level of literacy will contribute to their success and satisfaction in all aspects of their lives.

[15] Education, Culture and Employment. (2007). English language arts 10-3 and 20-3 curriculum.

[16] Education, Culture and Employment. (2006). NWT English language arts curriculum. p. 9.

Learning Environment for Literacy

Schooling in the NWT is based on the fundamental beliefs that all children are unique and capable of learning and experiencing success. They come to school with a vast potential for learning, bringing their life experience and knowledge with them. They share common needs and differences, and they all have the right to quality learning opportunities that are challenging and suited to their individual strengths, needs and learning styles. Education must be relevant and meaningful for each child and recognize that lifelong learning is a shared responsibility that occurs in the classroom, the home and the community.

It is the responsibility of the school to provide an environment where children build on what they learned in early childhood and continue to develop language knowledge, skills and strategies to achieve personal, social and academic goals. This is most likely to happen in a positive, affirming, language-rich environment that actively involves students in challenging, motivating and authentic learning opportunities.

Literacy in NWT Schools

Committed leadership is critical for successful literacy learning in schools if a school-wide literacy approach is to be introduced. With that commitment, early reading becomes the number one priority. Leadership will also provide the necessary support to build up the components of a school-wide program and subsequently acknowledge, value and celebrate achievements.

Critical components of such an approach include literacy-focused teacher education and professional development for teachers, literacy/numeracy coaches in every school and school libraries staffed with qualified librarians. Other essential factors include an abundance of appropriate learning resources and literacy assessment for the purpose of designing instruction as well as for assessing student progress.[17] Finally, parental and community support is essential to providing an all-encompassing network of support for student learning.

It is important that teacher education and professional development stress the skills and knowledge needed to be excellent literacy educators, recognizing the fact that language development is the responsibility of all teachers across the school. Professional development for teachers is essential for student success and needs to be intensive and long term, involving the active participation of the teachers involved.[18] Professional development, which may take a number of forms involving teachers working together or continuing education, must be accessible, sustainable and available when teachers can attend: "Professional contact like this can guard against teacher turnover – the major threat to sustaining excellent reading instruction in northern schools."[19]

In the primary grades, 40 to 50 percent of instructional time is focused on teaching language arts. Children in Canada are expected to read well by the end of grade three so that by grade four they are able to learn from textbooks and other materials, and to write what they know and think. In later grades, the expectation is that they understand and learn abstract concepts in subjects that have their own technical language. Studies have shown that a child's reading ability at the end of grade three is a strong predictor of high school graduation.[20]

[17] Ivey, G. and Fisher, D. (2006). Creating literacy-rich schools for adolescents.

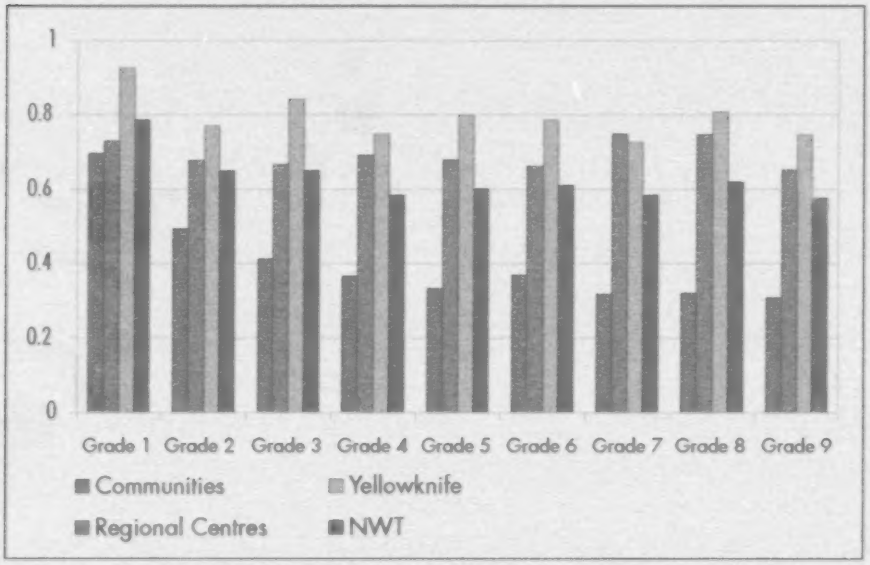
[18] Varlas, L. (2002). The road to lifelong literacy, curriculum – Technology quarterly. 12 (2).

[19] O'Sullivan, J. and Goosney, J. (2007). Get ready, get set, get going: Learning to read in northern Canada. p. 49.

[20] O'Sullivan, J. and Goosney, J. (2007). Get ready, get set, get going: Learning to read in northern Canada.

Some trends are becoming apparent across the NWT. Over the past three years, Functional Grade Levels (FGL) report that one out of five students in grade one is working on curriculum outcomes below a grade one level. In addition to this, many students take more than one year to complete the grade one outcomes. Of particular concern are the FGLs reported in the communities as compared to those reported in the regional centres and Yellowknife. In the communities, 39% of the students in grades one through nine are reported to be working on English Language Arts curriculum at the same level as their grade of enrollment, compared to 69% in the regional centres and 78% in Yellowknife.

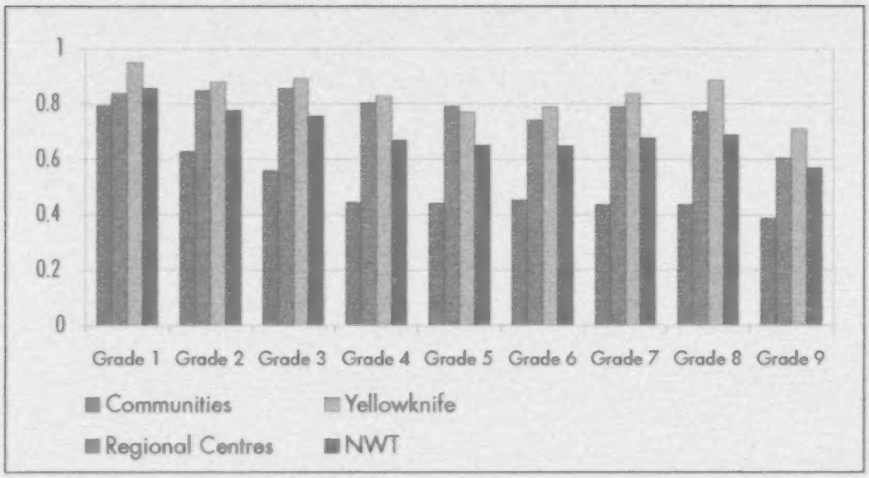
Figure 2: NWT Students At or Above Functional Grade Level, English Language Arts, 2006-2007[21]



NWT students also face significant challenges with numeracy. High percentages of students in the smaller communities are below functional grade levels in Mathematics. This trend of weak numeracy skills is more pronounced at the higher grades. Only 39% of grade nine students in the communities and 59% of NWT students are working on curriculum at grade level in Mathematics.

[21] Source: Education, Culture and Employment. Educational Operations and Development.

Figure 3: NWT Students At or Above Functional Grade Level, Mathematics, 2006-2007



Literacy Programming in Schools

To create the best possible learning environment, teachers must be skilled and motivated because "excellent teaching transcends language of instruction, background or aptitude of children and gets children going on the road to reading success."[22] Every primary classroom should be a language-saturated classroom in which teachers engage children in dialogue, model language use, encourage discussion and elaboration of ideas, and teach children about and to think about language and language structure.[23]

[22] O'Sullivan, J. and Goosney, J. (2007). Get ready, get set, get going: Learning to read in northern Canada. p. 5.

[23] O'Sullivan, J. and Goosney, J. (2007). Get ready, get set, get going: Learning to read in northern Canada. p. 29.

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Language-saturated classrooms depend on teachers who understand the interdependency of language, reading and thinking, and know the language well enough to explain how it works. Successful literacy teachers also understand that children have different ways of communicating and, by looking and listening closely, they find clues about how to engage them in learning through the use of multiple strategies. Children learn by incorporating new language structures into the language they already know.

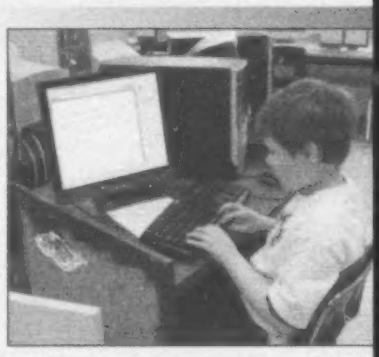
An excellent NWT reading program also requires that teachers new to the North receive orientation to the environment and culture to ensure that they understand the students they will be teaching and recognize, respect and incorporate the characteristics of the community they will be serving. They also require specific professional development related to the uniqueness of the NWT Language Arts curriculum. Teachers should be aware that children in their classroom may come from cultures that value listening, observing and doing as a major mode of learning.[24]

To ensure early literacy success of all children and to meet the diverse needs of each classroom, literacy/numeracy coaches can provide responsive and timely support needed in NWT schools. Literacy/numeracy coaches work collaboratively with teachers to enhance and build on the strategies they use in their classrooms. Their role may include coaching teachers, modelling lessons, providing feedback and differentiated support for teachers, encouraging reflective practice, coordinating joint planning, and helping to facilitate and plan professional development. School literacy/numeracy coaches help to ensure that all children have the best chance of becoming fluent readers early, making it possible for every child to experience success.

[24] O'Sullivan, J. and Goosney, J. (2007). Get ready, get set, get going: Learning to read in northern Canada. p. 30.

Another essential component of a strong school-wide literacy program is a school library staffed by a teacher-librarian. One of the greatest motivators for children to read and to learn from reading is to provide them with readable, interesting and accessible materials. Today's school library, along with printed materials, must also provide a wide range of culturally relevant materials as well as the most current technology needed to access all forms of electronic resources. Libraries add amazing motivation and interest to student learning when guided and cared for by someone who understands children's learning, knows the curriculum and knows how the two work together.

Finally, children learn best when their early learning within the family makes a seamless transition to a school, representing and reflecting the beliefs and values of the parents and community. In a mutually respectful, trusting and equitable environment, strong partnerships between the home and school can become the children's greatest support where the importance of literacy learning and high expectations become central to the school experience.

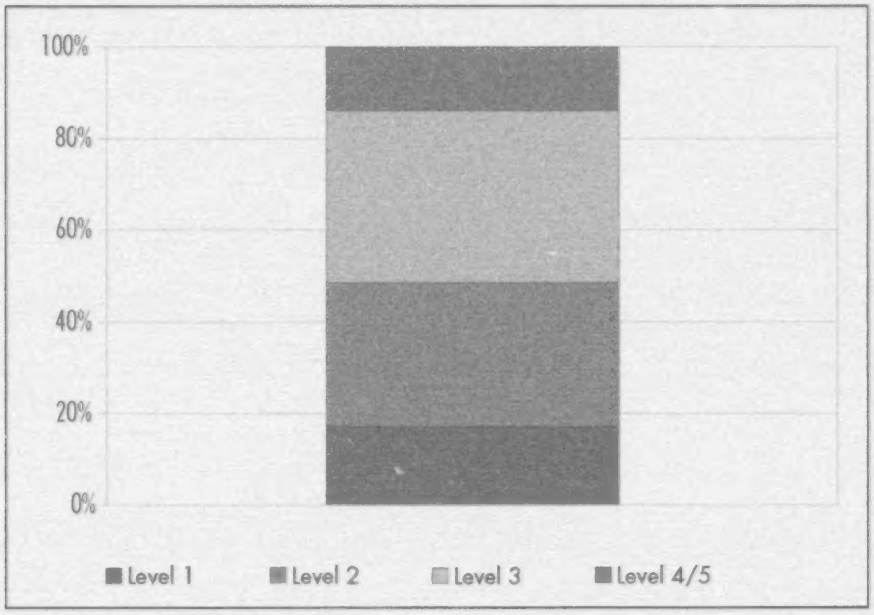


"One of the greatest motivators for children to read and to learn from reading is to provide them with readable, interesting and accessible materials."

Youth Literacy

Youth literacy is a critical issue because youth are the future of the NWT. IALSS data shows that 48.4% of NWT youth, 16 to 25, are below Level 3 prose literacy.

Figure 4: Percentage Distribution of Prose Literacy, NWT Youth, 16 to 25[25]



A high percentage of NWT youth, 16 to 25, are below functional literacy (Level 3) in all skill domains.

[25] Data for Figure 4 from Table 1.28 of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results for the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.

Table 5: Percentage of NWT Youth, 16 to 25, Below Level 3 Literacy[26]

Percentage of NWT Youth, 16 to 25, Below Level 3 Literacy	
Prose Literacy	48.4
Document Literacy	48.7
Numeracy	53.0
Problem Solving	76.1

These figures mean a disproportionate number of NWT youth are already at a disadvantage because of low literacy.

Causes of Low Youth Literacy

The most common cause of low youth literacy is falling behind in elementary school:

> ...a common reason for the academic and related behavioural difficulties that many adolescents encounter is that they do not learn to read by the time they complete third grade. That is where, traditionally, children are expected to shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Children whose literacy skills lag significantly at that time often face an uphill challenge throughout their school and work careers.[27]

Since most knowledge is acquired through reading, low literacy skills in early grades hinder youth from future academic progress.[28]

Because youth who can't read feel ashamed as they progress to higher grades, low youth literacy is often associated with emotional and behavioural problems:

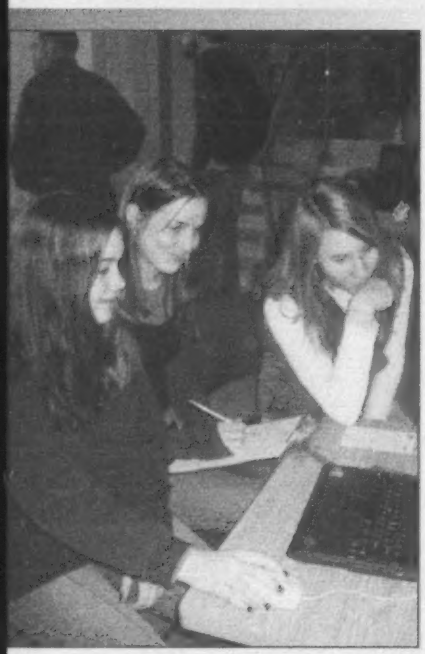
> ...competence and confidence decrease, often leading to reduced self-esteem and increased frustration. Responses tend to be of two kinds: students either disengage and shut down or become angry and act out.[29]

[26] Data for Table 5 from Table 1.2B of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results for the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.

[27] Literacy BC. (2005). The national youth literacy demonstration project. Retrieved April 29, 2008, from http://www.youthliteracy.ca/nf_html_images/overview.html, p. 4.

[28] Literacy BC. (2005). The national youth literacy demonstration project. Retrieved April 29, 2008, from http://www.youthliteracy.ca/nf_html_images/overview.html. p. 4.

[29] Literacy BC. (2005). The national youth literacy demonstration project. Retrieved April 29, 2008, from http://www.youthliteracy.ca/nf_html_images/overview.html. p. 4.



Youth with low literacy are often perceived as problem students. Because they lack the reading skills to succeed academically, they become alienated and often drop out of school. For some youth, low literacy is compounded with other barriers, such as learning disabilities and unstable home environments. Youth with multiple barriers become at risk of making destructive lifestyle choices.

Increasing Youth Literacy

Alternate educational programs, designed for at-risk youth with significant literacy challenges, use a variety of promising practices to foster student success:

- Comprehensive and holistic approach;
- Safe and separate learning environment;
- Small classes;
- A full-time counsellor on staff;
- Teaching students how to learn;
- Project-based learning;
- Focus on social and emotional development;
- Regular access to creative activities;
- Integrating technology into instruction;
- Multimedia and visual aids;
- High interest, easy to navigate instructional materials; and
- "Homework Club," which provides space and support for study.[30]

Youth are NWT's future leaders and future skill supply. If almost half of NWT youth lack the skills they need for today's world, it affects NWT society as a whole. Innovative educational programs, which keep low literacy youth in school and enable them to succeed, are needed to break the cycle of disadvantage many NWT youth are caught in.

[30] Literacy BC. (2005). The national youth literacy demonstration project. Retrieved April 29, 2008, from http://www.youthliteracy.ca/nf_html_images/overview.html. pp. 20-12, 18, 21-30.

Adult Literacy

In the Northwest Territories, adult literacy needs remain acute. 42.6% of the NWT population over 16 – a total of 11,000 adults – are below IALSS Level 3, the international standard for functional literacy.

Table 6: Percentage and Numbers of NWT Adults, 16+, Below Level 3 Prose Literacy

Level 1		Level 2		Level 3	
Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
16.5	4,000	26.1	7,000	42.6	11,000

These statistics mean that a large portion of NWT adults lack the basic literacy skills to process the complex information that is increasingly prevalent in 21st century society. As skills shortages driven by the booming NWT economy accelerate, pressure to improve adult literacy levels will increase.

Barriers to Adult Learning

Adults, who have not acquired the literacy skills they need, face many challenges when they undertake a course of study. The concept of barriers to participation in adult learning has been prevalent in adult education literature over the past 50 years.[31] Six different kinds of barriers to adult learning have been identified: situational, institutional, attitudinal, academic, pedagogical and employment training barriers.

[31] MacKeracher, D., Suart, T. and Potter, J. (2006). State of the field report: Barriers to participation in adult learning. p. 2.

Table 7: Barriers to Adult Learning[32]

Barrier	Description	Examples
Situational	Broad circumstantial conditions that hamper the ability of adult learners to pursue learning opportunities	Multiple conflicting responsibilities of home, family, children and work; financial problems; inadequate child care; job commitments; transportation problems; disabilities; health problems; lack of support from family and friends
Institutional	Limitations inherent in the methods institutions use to design, deliver and administer learning activities	High tuition fees; insufficient learning resources; negative attitudes towards learners; general lack of student support services; no recognition of learners' prior learning
Attitudinal	Learners' perceptions of their ability to participate in and complete learning activities	Low self-esteem; past negative learning experiences; negative attitudes about being an adult learner; lack of motivation or interest

[32] MacKeracher, D., Suart, T. and Potter, J. (2006). State of the field report: Barriers to participation in adult learning. pp. 2-3.

Barrier	Description	Examples
Academic	Lack of foundational skills essential to successful learning	Under-developed basic literacy skills, numeracy, computer skills, information-processing ability, critical thinking, writing skills
Pedagogical	Limited knowledge on the part of instructors and administrators about how adults learn and the principles of adult education	Insufficient professional development concerning the benefits of learner-centred teaching and active learning; diversity of adult learning styles; adult learners' need for relevant content; need for recognition of prior learning; adult learners' need for respect
Employment Training	No support from employers for training	Employers are less likely to support low-wage workers and less educated employees to receive job-related training

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Adult Literacy Supports

Effective adult literacy programs provide a broad range of supports, which help adult learners overcome barriers to learning. A key means of providing support to adult learners is to design and deliver programs based upon the principles of adult education. Knowles (1970) pioneered the field of adult education and coined the term andragogy, which means "the art and science of helping adults learn."[33] Knowles' andragogy theory (1970)[34] identified four basic principles of adult education:

1. Adults have a rich repository of life experience and prior knowledge that provides the basis of their learning.
2. Adults need to be free to direct their own learning and discover things for themselves.
3. Adults learn most readily when the content has immediate relevance to their lives.
4. Adult learning is problem-centred, with practical applications, rather than content-oriented.

Effective adult literacy programs recognize and build upon learners' prior experience, allow students to direct their own learning, offer relevant content and use practical real-life applications.

"Effective adult literacy programs provide a broad range of supports, which help adult learners overcome barriers to learning."

[33] Knowles, M. (1970). The adult learner: A neglected species.

[34] Knowles, M. (1970). The adult learner: A neglected species. In 1984, Knowles added internal motivation as a fifth adult education principle.

Quality adult literacy and basic education programs respect learners and support them to achieve their goals.[35] The Best Practices in Action (2004) manual recommends providing support for NWT adult learners in the classroom and in their lives outside the classroom:

Classroom Support

- A safe, orderly, comfortable learning environment conducive to learning.
- Recognition of and building upon learners' strengths.
- Respect for the diverse cultures of the learners.
- Selection of culturally relevant materials and topics.
- Assessment, specialized equipment and transportation available for learners with special needs.
- Promotion of mutual respect among learners, staff and others involved in the program.
- Positive language when referring to learners.

Extracurricular Support

- Awareness of and sensitivity to the multiple roles of learners.
- Activities that include learners' families.
- Information about available support services.
- Identification of learners' support needs, such as funding, counselling, childcare and housing, during intake interviews.
- Follow-up support for learners who are facing barriers and require additional support.[36]

[35] NWT Literacy Council; Aurora College; and Education, Culture and Employment. (2004). Best practices in action: Tools for community-based adult literacy and basic education programs. p. 62.

[36] NWT Literacy Council; Aurora College; and Education, Culture and Employment. (2004). Best practices in action: Tools for community-based adult literacy and basic education programs. pp. 62-64, 70-71.

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Adult education literature distinguishes between "banking education," where "the 'expert' teacher is viewed as depositing information into passive students' minds," and learner-centred literacy instruction, in which "students can share power in the instructional process."[37] The NWT Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) Directive (2000) underscores the importance of learner-centred literacy instruction:

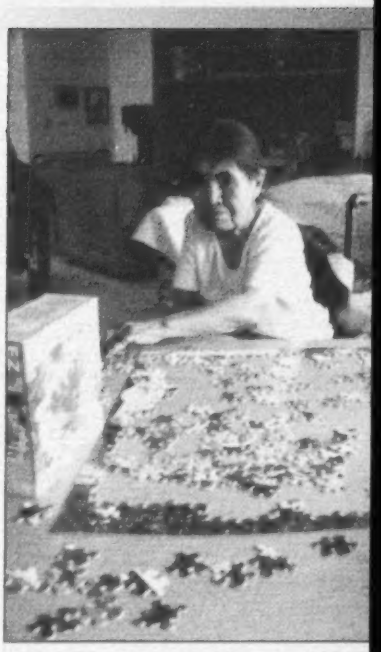
> Learner-centred Adult Literacy and Basic Education programs and services make the needs, interests, abilities and goals of students a priority. The service providers recognize different learning styles and preferences and respond with relevant and appropriate assessment, instruction and evaluation. The learners are partners in the planning and decision-making. Learner-centred Adult Literacy and Basic Education programs also recognize and value learners' prior knowledge and experience, and support the personal growth of learners.[38]

Returning to school to improve literacy levels and upgrade educational qualifications can be daunting for adult learners with family commitments, job responsibilities and other learning challenges. Learner-centred adult literacy programs, which offer adequate levels of learner support, are integral to improving NWT adult literacy levels.

[37] Fingeret, H.A. (1994). Adult literacy education: Current and future directions. pp. 8-9.

[38] Education, Culture and Employment. (2000). Adult literacy and basic education directive.

Literacy and Seniors



IALSS provides evidence that NWT adults over 65 have the lowest literacy levels of all NWT adults. NWT seniors have average proficiency scores at IALSS Level 1 in all skill domains – considerably below the average scores for other NWT adults.

Table 8: NWT Average Proficiency Scores by Age Group[39]

	Prose Literacy	Document Literacy	Numeracy	Problem Solving
16 to 25	274	276	265	267
25 to 35	287	287	276	276
36 to 45	282	281	270	271
46 to 55	281	278	271	268
56 to 65	267	266	257	256
Over 65	185	183	170	184

IALSS data on skill proficiencies for NWT adults over 65 further accentuates the seriousness of NWT seniors' literacy levels. Less than 8% of NWT seniors are at Level 3 or higher, the international standard for functional literacy.[40]

Table 9: Percent Distribution of Skill Proficiencies for NWT Adults, 65+[41]

	Prose Literacy	Document Literacy	Numeracy	Problem Solving
Level 1	74.8	79.0	83.6	91.1
Level 2	18.2	14.3	9.6	3.6
Level 3	3.1	2.0	4.1	5.3
Level 4/5	4.0	4.6	2.7	0.0

[39] Data for Table 8 from Table 1.2A of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

[40] Level 3 and above highlighted in red.

[41] Data for Table 9 from Table 1.2B of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

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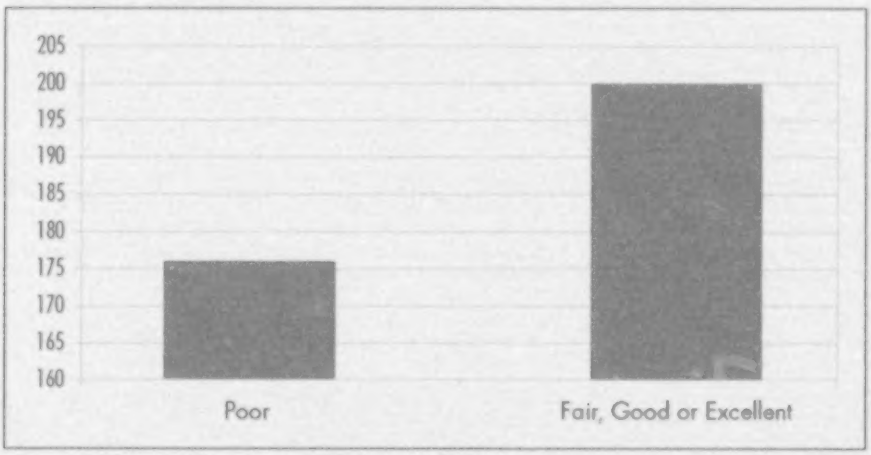
The need for seniors' literacy initiatives will increase in future years because seniors will comprise a larger percentage of the NWT population. The proportion of seniors in the NWT is expected to almost double in the next 15 years. In 2006, 4.82% of the NWT population was 65 and over. Population projections indicate that, by 2021, 8.11% of the NWT population will be 65 and over. 7.89% of the NWT population was 60 and over in 2006. By 2021, NWT residents 60 and over are projected to be 12.76% of the population.[42]

Health of NWT Seniors

The ability or inability to use printed health information has an obvious impact on personal health of NWT seniors. IALSS data shows a strong correlation between low document literacy for NWT seniors and poor health. Average document literacy scores for NWT adults 66 and over were 24 points lower for seniors who described themselves as being in poor health than for seniors who reported being in fair, good or excellent health.

Figure 5: Average Document Literacy Scores by Physical Health Summary for NWT Adults, 66+[43]



[42] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Population projections by age: Northwest Territories 2006 to 2021.

[43] Data for Figure 5 from Table 5.1 of Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

Because elderly people are more likely to use medication and take multiple drugs than their younger counterparts, seniors with low literacy are at greater risk of medication errors. Seniors with low literacy levels also experience challenges understanding health maintenance and prevention information.

Quality of Life for Seniors

For seniors, literacy development is integrally linked with quality of life. Literacy has a major impact on the physiological effects of aging on the brain. Declining brain function is a natural function of aging:

> According to brain research, age alters the structure of the brain: overall brain mass shrinks modestly in some people beginning around the age of 60 or 70. The cortex also undergoes a modest thinning and the brain's white matter decreases, influencing the transmission of signals between different regions of the brain. Neurotransmitters... become less available with age and this may play a role in declining memory among older adults.[44]

However, environmental factors, such as intellectual stimulation, can offset the effects of aging on the brain:[45]

> ...there are many things we can do throughout life to make a difference in brain health as we age:
>
> Use Your Mind
>
> "Exercising" your mind may forestall mental decline by strengthening connections between brain cells. Intellectual challenge seems to be crucial.[46]

[44] Canadian Council on Learning. (2006). Never too old to learn: Seniors and learning in Canada. p. 2.
[45] Canadian Council on Learning. (2006). Never too old to learn: Seniors and learning in Canada. p. 3.
[46] The Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives. (2004). Staying sharp: Current advances in brain research. p. 2.

Seniors who maintain "cognitive fitness"[47] through literacy development and continuous learning are less likely to experience negative effects from declining brain function.

Literacy also impacts the social and economic quality of life of seniors. Research into seniors' literacy in the NWT established that seniors with low literacy levels are more prone to poverty, financial exploitation, social isolation and loss of independence.[48] In contrast, seniors with higher literacy levels experience many social and economic benefits:

- being able to live independently as long as possible;
- being able to handle one's personal finances and avoid "scams";
- remaining healthy and fit;
- continuing to be socially involved and connected to one's community;
- participating in the labour market; and
- coping with automation such as bank machines, telephone messaging services and computers.[49]

Even though most seniors are not attached to the labour market, literacy skill development is very important for this age group. Literacy has a profound impact on the health and quality of life of NWT seniors.

[47] The Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives. (2004). Staying sharp: Current advances in brain research. p. 2.
[48] Lutra Associates. (2004). Seniors' literacy in the NWT. p. 14.
[49] Lutra Associates. (2004). Seniors' literacy in the NWT. p. 5.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education recognizes that all individuals have the potential to learn provided they are given the opportunity to reach that potential. Learners have unique strengths and weaknesses as well as individual learning styles. For learners to succeed, it is important to start with individuals' strengths and set reasonable, achievable goals.

Everyone has unique daily challenges and everyone benefits from a support network of family, friends and professionals who help with achieving goals. For individuals with disabilities, it is helpful to learn as much as possible about the disability as well as available supports and resource personnel.

Learning Supports

Disabilities impact the way in which individuals learn. With knowledge of disabilities, strategies, tools and support staff, educators can create positive learning environments and opportunities for success for individuals with disabilities.

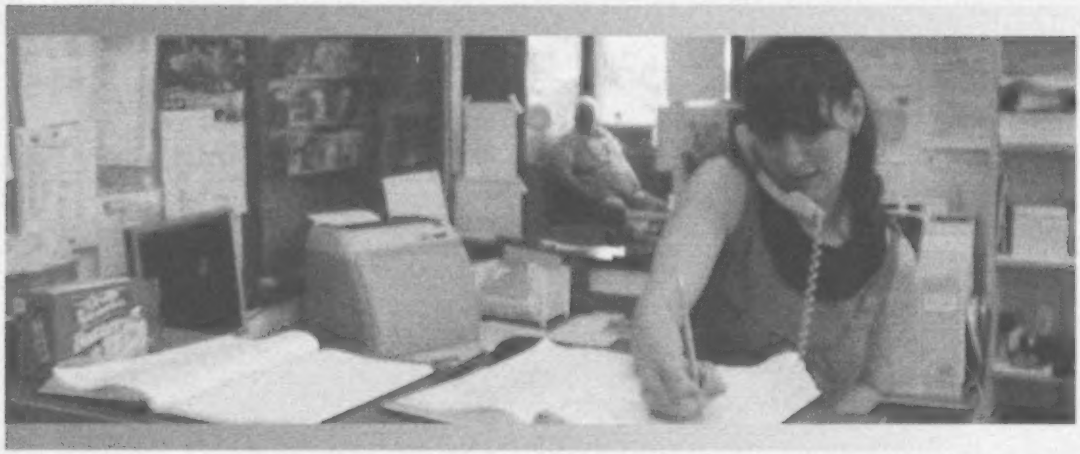
A wide range of supports is available to help individuals with disabilities learn and reach their potential:

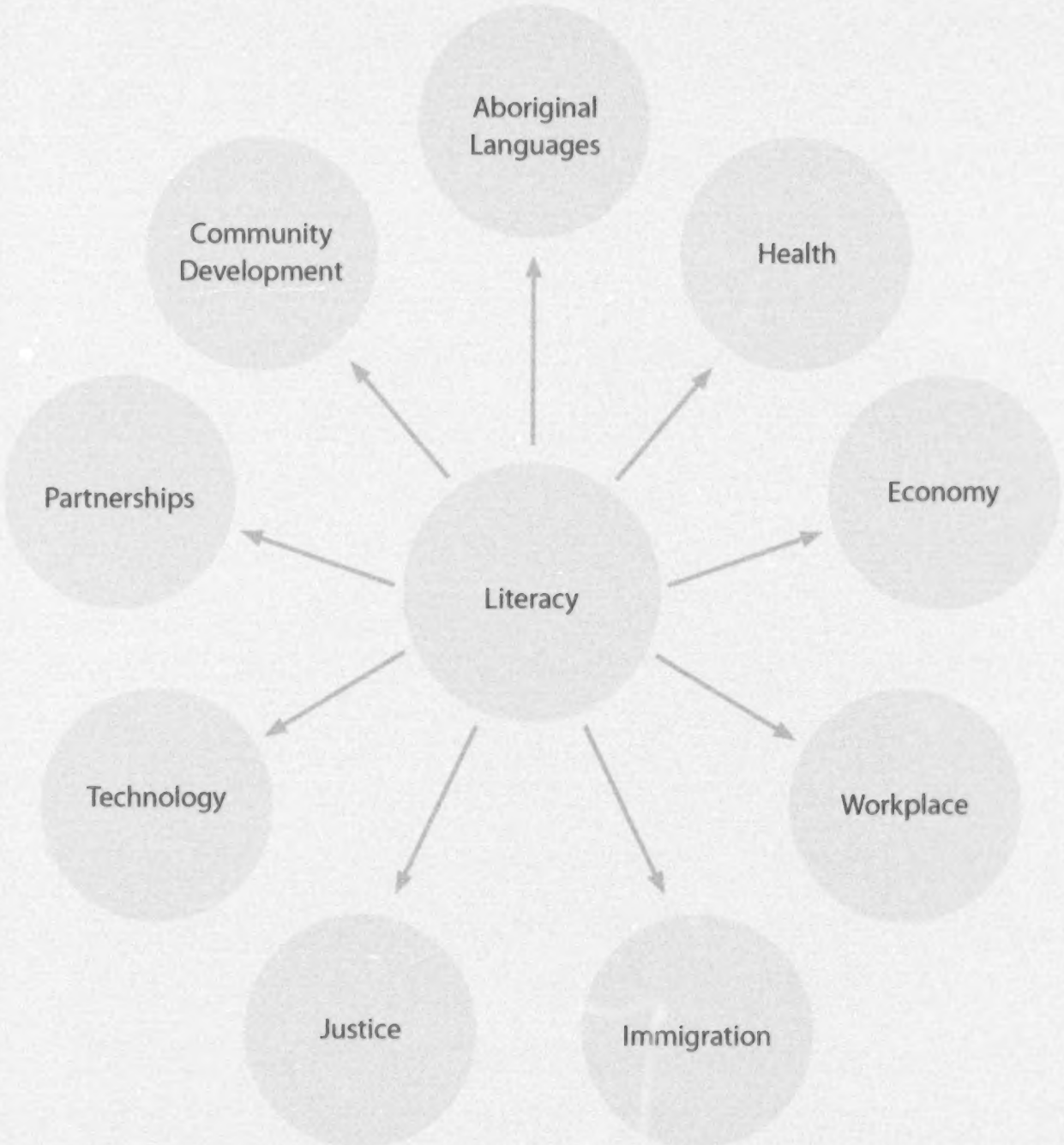
- Emotional and behavioural supports, including counselling services.
- Printed materials with larger font.
- Assistive technology, including computer technology and communication devices:
  - Braille equipment,
  - laptops,
  - books on tape,
  - communication boards with pictures, symbols, letters or words, and
  - voice synthesizers.

- Adaptive aids and equipment:
  - wheelchairs,
  - typewriters,
  - headsticks,
  - clamps, and
  - modified handles on cups and silverware.
- Increased knowledge of and awareness of the disability for family, friends and educators.
- American Sign Language.
- Inclusion of parents and family.
- Professional supports, agencies and organizations.
- Structured environments.
- Teaching habit patterns.
- Use of concrete language.
- Modifications of individual's education program:
  - tailored instruction and curriculum,
  - extended time for completion of assignments and exams,
  - tutoring, including peer tutors where appropriate,
  - displayed schedule to provide structure,
  - seating arrangements,
  - colour-coded materials to encourage development of organizational skills,
  - technology,
  - behaviour modification plans,
  - opportunities to learn using manipulatives,
  - simplified directions,
  - verbal and written instructions, and
  - computer-based learning programs.

It is important to remember that individuals with disabilities have the right to opportunities that the rest of society enjoys. Some disabilities are more severe than others, and this needs to be taken into consideration when providing academic supports. Although individuals with disabilities may differ in the supports they need, they do not differ in their ability to learn and to be successful in their own right.

LITERACY
ACROSS SOCIETY




Aboriginal Languages
Community Development
Health
Partnerships
Economy
Literacy
Technology
Workplace
Justice
Immigration

Aboriginal Languages Literacy

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The Northwest Territories attaches a strong value to self-identity, traditional culture and language, as being important and integral to lifelong learning. It is reasonable and obvious in the minds of the elders that language is very much a part of who Aboriginal people are as people and can only enrich the learning environment as an important asset. More precisely, the traditional elders speak about the importance of relationships and the interconnectedness of self, others, the land and the spiritual world. Ownership for learning and honouring education comes with becoming "capable" in all relationships. This ancestral thinking pattern, along with the language and unique worldview, are rapidly disappearing with the passing of each fluent speaker. Today, the natural transmission of language in the home is minimal, according to the most recent Canadian census.

Language communities are making serious efforts to revitalize the languages, but to do this within a larger social structure is difficult and daunting. Aboriginal languages, which have stood the test of time through oral transmission from generation to generation, are losing their rich meaning as the language is transformed into written forms that cannot translate many concepts.

It is the role of the Government of the Northwest Territories to support the Aboriginal languages in the schools and communities through legislation as set out in the Official Languages Act. The Official Languages Act recognizes the 11 official languages of the NWT: Chipewyan, Cree, English, French, Gwich'in, Innuinaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłı̨chǫ.

Benefits of Speaking an Aboriginal Language

Speaking an Aboriginal language provides valuable advantages:

- Sharing language strengthens the bonds between generations.
- Understanding the language of one's culture makes it possible to better understand the history, environmental context and worldview of one's people.
- Aboriginal language is crucial to a person's identity and self-esteem.[50]
- Bilingualism develops meta-cognitive skills, resulting in strong problem-solving abilities and a greater acceptance of diversity in society.[51]
- Studies have shown that bilingualism contributes to the intellectual development and achievement of children.[52]

Strategies for Language Learning

Fishman (1990) identified eight stages for revitalizing language that can be applied to NWT Aboriginal languages:

1. Reconstruction of the language by compiling knowledge of the language from fluent speakers;
2. Recruiting elders to speak, teach and model the language, both formally and informally;
3. Promoting the use of the language in the family and the community;
4. Integrating the language into the early childhood and school system;
5. Replacing the dominant language with the Aboriginal language through early immersion programs;

[50] Paulsen, R.L. (2003). Native literacy: A living language. Canadian journal of native education, 27 (1), 23-28.

[51] Bialystock, E. (2005). Consequences of bilingualism for cognitive development.

[52] Greymorning, S. (1997). Going beyond words: The Arapaho immersion program. Teaching indigenous languages.

6. Integration of the language into the workplace;
7. Use of the language in government services that have direct contact with people; and
8. Use of the language in postsecondary education as the language of instruction.[53]

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Since parents are generally a child's first teacher, ideally, the Aboriginal language is learned at home, between the ages of two and six, when children are at the optimal time for first language learning. Children who attend early childhood programs may have the opportunity to learn an Aboriginal language by attending a Language Nest where they are immersed in the Aboriginal language of the community, either in a daycare or playschool setting.

Language Nests must, however, be followed by immersion programs in the school system in order for children to continue to progress with their language learning. Successful programs require trained teachers, curricula and an abundance of teaching resources as well as a coordinated effort to promote the advantages of bilingualism to parents.

Restoring the intergenerational transmission of the Aboriginal languages successfully is the responsibility of the whole community and, for that purpose, in the NWT, Aboriginal language communities have been created. Each "community," which represents all the speakers of a given language, develops goals for language use in the community, determines priorities for language preservation, revitalization and enhancement, facilitates initiatives to support language use, promotes research, curriculum development and the general use of the language in public forums and local government.[54]

[53] Fishman, J. (1990). "What is reversing language shift (RLS) and how can it succeed?" Journal of multilingual and multicultural development 11 (1 and 2).

[54] Education, Culture and Employment. (2002). Revitalizing, enhancing and promoting Aboriginal languages: Strategies for supporting Aboriginal languages.

Aboriginal First Language Speakers

The current environment in the NWT is reassuring in that there are existing strengths on which to draw. First, there continues to be a reasonable "critical mass" of speakers to facilitate language learning. Second, middle-age and elder speakers exist in each Aboriginal language group. Third, the Tłı̨chǫ and Slavey languages have a significant portion of young speakers.[55]

The NWT government continues to support the preservation, revitalization and use of the Aboriginal languages through the Official Languages Act and through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) Strategic Plan, Building on Our Success: Strategic Plan 2005-2015. ECE initiatives include the Aboriginal Language and Culture-based Education Directive and the culture-based curricula, Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit, mandated for all NWT schools. Funding is provided to support Language Nests, early Aboriginal immersion programs, K-12 Aboriginal language classes, Aboriginal language teacher education, Teaching and Learning Centres, and language communities.

According to the 2006 Census, 5,765 people in the NWT identify an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue or first language. This total can be broken down by individual language communities: Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłı̨chǫ.

[55] Ignace, M. (2002). Review of successful models of language nests and adult language acquisition programs.

Table 10: NWT Persons Identifying an Aboriginal Language as Their Mother Tongue, 2006[56]

Aboriginal Language	Number of Persons	Percent of all Mother Tongues
Tłı̨chǫ	2,040	5.0%
South Slavey	1,310	3.2%
North Slavey	860	2.1%
Inuktitut (Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun, Inuktitut)	740	1.8%
Chipewyan	410	1.0%
Cree	205	0.5%
Gwich'in	200	0.5%
Total	5,765	

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Participation in Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs

In 2006-2007, in the NWT, 53 percent of students enrolled in K-9 participated in Aboriginal language and culture programs. A further breakdown shows that 92 percent of students living in NWT communities and 57 percent living in regional centres participated in Aboriginal language and culture programs, whereas, in Yellowknife, 15 percent participated. In community high schools, 43 percent of students were enrolled in an Aboriginal language course.

[56] Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics. 2006 Census.

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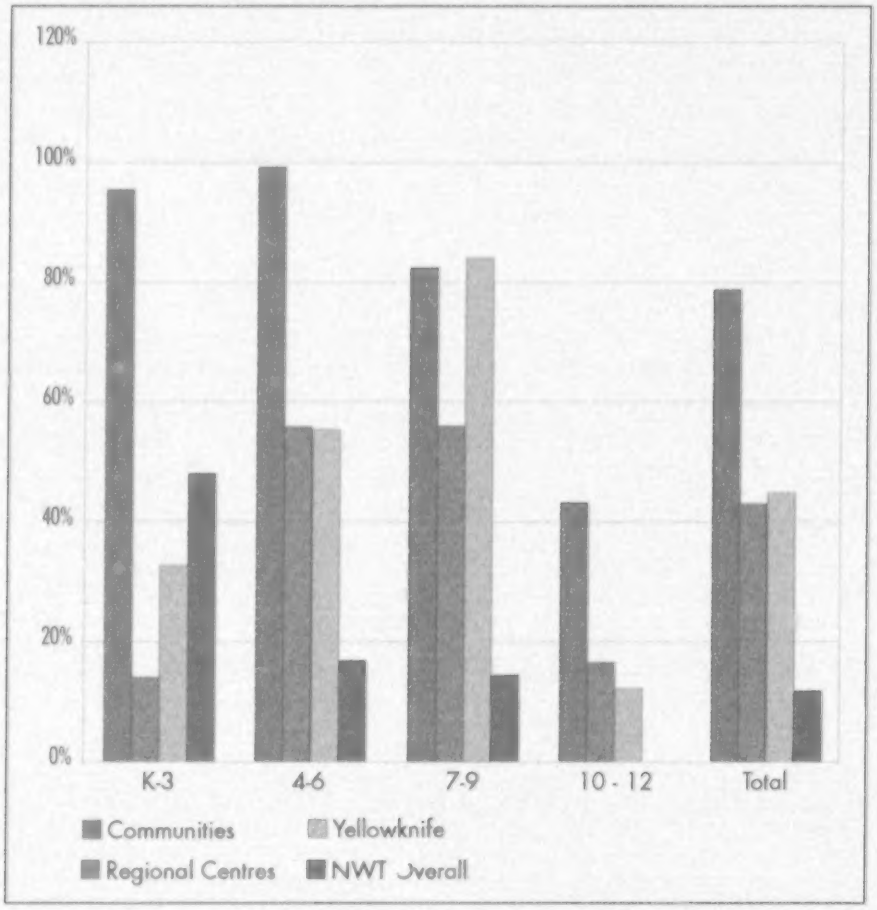
Figure 6: Percentage of NWT Students Participating in Aboriginal Language Programs, 2006-2007[57]



In 2006-2007, Aboriginal language immersion programs were introduced in kindergarten in Fort Providence, Wrigley and Deline, and extended to grade one in 2007-2008.

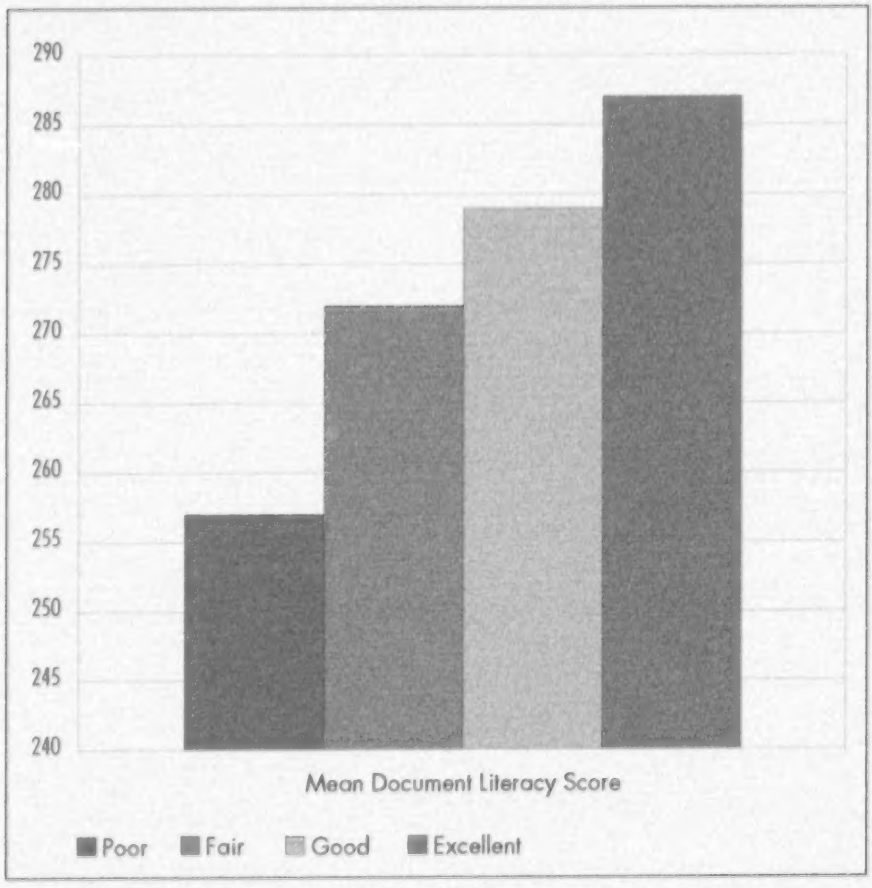
Aurora College offers training for Aboriginal language teachers, both part-time and full-time, through community-based programming. Education, Culture and Employment certifies the graduates who are qualified to teach an Aboriginal language from K-12.

[57] Source: Education, Culture and Employment. Education Operations and Development. (2007). Survey of NWT Divisional Education Councils and District Education Authorities.

Literacy and Health

There is compelling evidence of the correlation between literacy and health. IALSS reveals a strong linkage between physical health condition and document literacy levels for NWT adults. IALSS respondents were asked to rate their physical health as excellent, good, fair or poor. Physical health conditions for NWT adults improve as document literacy levels increase.

Figure 7: NWT Mean Document Literacy Scores by Physical Health Condition, 16+ [58]



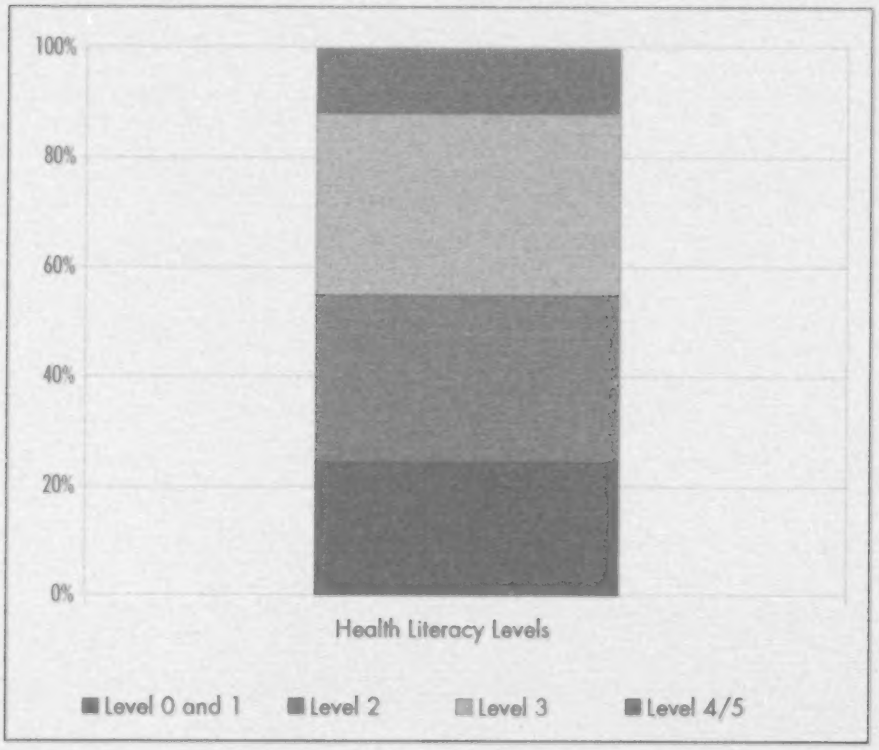
[58] 2003 IALSS data from Murray, T.S. (2006). The central role of literacy in health and wealth of provinces: Evidence from IALSS, ALL and PISA.

Health Literacy Definition

> The ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings across the life-course.[59]

As illustrated in Figure 8, 54.9% of NWT adults have health literacy scores below Level 3.

Figure 8: Distribution of NWT Health Literacy Levels, 16+, 2003[60]

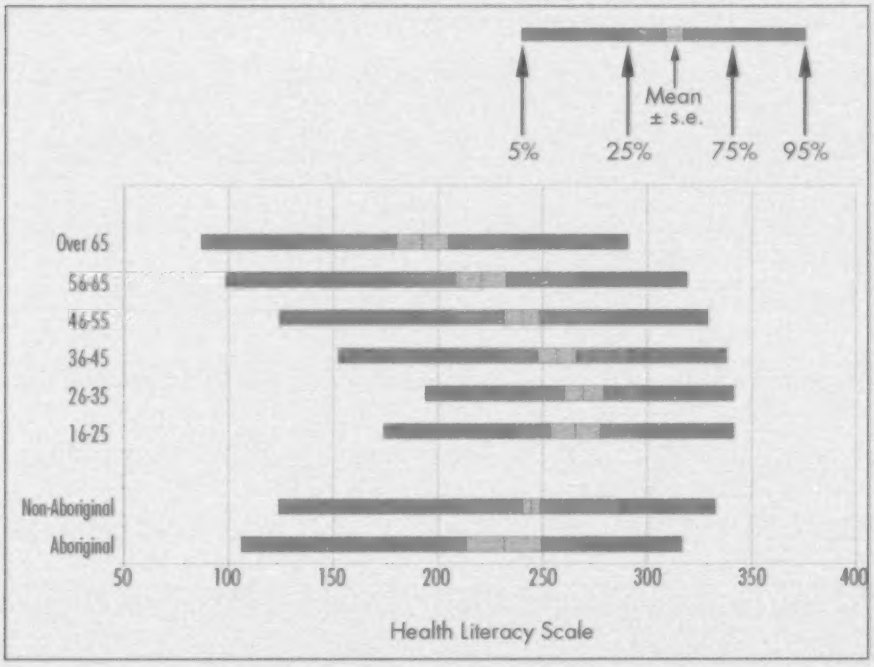


[59] Canadian Public Health Association. (2008). A vision for a health literate Canada: Report of the expert panel on health literacy. p. 11.

[60] Source: Canadian Council on Learning.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of NWT health literacy levels by age group and ethnicity. Older NWT residents, who are more likely to use the NWT health-care system, have lower health literacy levels than younger NWT residents. As well, NWT Aboriginal adults have lower levels of health literacy than non-Aboriginal adults.

Figure 9: Percentile Distribution of NWT Adult Health Literacy Levels, by Age Group and Ethnicity, 2003[61]



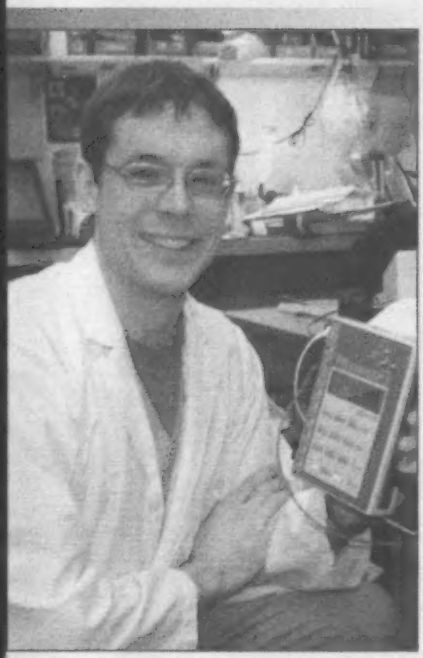
Impacts of Low Health Literacy

Low health literacy levels result in reduced quality of life for individuals and higher health-care costs for governments. The Public Health Agency of Canada lists "education and literacy" as a key determinant of health:

> People with low literacy skills often feel alienated and have difficulty finding and accessing health information and services. As a result, they suffer poorer health than those who have higher literacy skills.[62]

[61] Source: Canadian Council on Learning.

[62] Public Health Agency of Canada. (1999). Towards a healthy future – Second report on the health of Canadians. p. 52.



In addition to citing the direct impact of literacy on health, the Public Health Agency of Canada documents the effects of literacy on other key determinants of health, such as income, employment, physical environment and social environment:

> Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed and poor, to suffer poorer health and to die earlier than Canadians with high levels of literacy. People with higher levels of education have better access to healthy physical environments... They also tend to smoke less, to be more physically active and to have access to healthier foods.[63]

People with low literacy levels experience multiple disadvantages that affect their health. They have difficulty accessing and understanding health information, and they are less likely to have sufficient resources to purchase healthy food and live in healthy environments.

The effects of low health literacy are extensive, affecting every aspect of health and well-being. The most commonly cited example of the impact of low literacy on health is people who experience adverse health effects because they are unable to read medication labels. However, the impact of low health literacy is much more pervasive. Low literacy affects the ability to maintain good health, to avoid injury and disease, to manage health conditions and even to access the health-care system. Recent research has divided health-related activities for daily life into five categories: health promotion, health protection, disease prevention, healthcare and systems navigation.[64]

[63] Public Health Agency of Canada. (2004). What determines health? Retrieved January 8, 2007, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/phdd/determinants/index.html.

[64] Canadian Council of Learning. (2007). Health literacy in Canada. pp. 17-19.

Literacy and Health Management

Because of the complexity of health information and the health-care system, adequate levels of health literacy require proficiency in a range of competencies:

> ...health literacy involves the simultaneous use of a more complex and interconnected set of abilities: to read and act upon written information, to communicate needs to health professionals, and to understand health instructions.[65]

As indicated in Table 11, individuals need literacy and numeracy skills in order to execute all of the different kinds of tasks associated with health-related activities.

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Table 11: Categories of Health Activities with Selected Examples[66]

Health Activity	Focus	Sample Materials	Sample Tasks
Health Promotion	Enhance and maintain health	Newspaper and magazine articles, books, brochures, charts, lists, food and product labels	• Plan nutritious meals • Purchase healthy food • Plan exercise regimen
Health Protection	Safeguard health of individuals and communities	Newspaper and magazine articles, safety manuals, health and safety warnings, air and water quality reports	• Avoid unsafe products • Follow safety procedures • Maintain a safe home environment

[65] Canadian Council on Learning. (2008). Health literacy in Canada: A healthy understanding. p. 5.

[66] Adapted from Table 2 of Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). Health literacy in Canada. p. 19.

Health Activity	Focus	Sample Materials	Sample Tasks
Disease Prevention	Take preventive measures and engage in early detection	News alerts, postings on inoculations and screenings, test preparation instructions, disease prevention brochures, graphs, charts	• Engage in screening or diagnostic tests • Follow instructions to prepare for tests • Avoid unnecessary exposure to disease
Healthcare and Maintenance	Seek care and form partnerships with healthcare providers	Health history forms, medication labels, information booklets, Internet health information	• Describe and measure symptoms • Take correct dosages of medications • Adhere to dietary restrictions • Make decisions on treatment options
Systems Navigation	Access needed services in the healthcare system	Maps, application forms, statements of rights and responsibilities, health benefit packages	• Locate health facilities • Apply for health benefits • Offer informed consent

As the Canadian IALSS report (2005) points out, linkages between literacy and health are expected to increase:

> The literacy demands placed on Canadians responsible for managing their own health and well-being are likely to grow in complexity as the Canadian healthcare system evolves. The link between literacy and health may become even more important in future years.[67]

The Canadian healthcare system is moving more towards patient-centred care, which places increasing responsibility on individuals to manage their health:

> Patient-centred care puts responsibility for important aspects of self-care and monitoring in patients' hands. Shared decision-making requires that patients fully understand their health problems and treatment options. This can be challenging for people who have difficulties with reading, writing, numeracy, problem-solving and complicated oral information.[68]

Individuals who are unable to execute diverse health-related tasks because of insufficient literacy skills will experience multiple health setbacks for both themselves and their families. They will be less able to maintain good health, more susceptible to injury and disease, and more likely to intensify health problems by not getting proper care.

[67] Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. (2005). p. 94.

[68] Rootman, I. and Gordon-El-Bihbety, D. (2008). A vision for a health literate Canada: Report of the expert panel on health literacy. p. 27.

Improving Health Literacy

Canadian policy makers and researchers have proposed several solutions for the reduced individual health and high healthcare costs associated with low health literacy levels:

- Investing in programs that increase adult literacy levels;
- Increased collaboration between health and education professionals;
- More health instruction in education programs;
- Increased literacy awareness training for health professionals;
- Creation of more accessible plain language health information; and
- Increased research on the correlation between health and literacy.[70]

Investment in increasing adult literacy levels and plain language health information appears to be the most effective means of improving individual health and reducing healthcare costs:

> Taking steps to raise health literacy skills while decreasing the challenges of navigating our healthcare system might turn out to be low-cost approaches to improving overall levels of health and well-being.[71]

Because individuals will be expected to assume more responsibility for managing personal health in the future, it will become increasingly important to increase the health literacy levels of the NWT population.

[70] Chiarelli and Edwards. (2006). Building public health policy. Canadian journal of public health 97(2), 37-42.

[71] Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). Health literacy in Canada. p. 6.

Literacy and the Economy

Through a combination of positive economic benefits and reduced social costs, increases in literacy levels strengthen the overall economy of a society. As early as 1958, economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote that increasing literacy levels was the key to economic development:

> People are the common denominator of progress. So... no improvement is possible with unimproved people, and advance is certain when people are liberated and educated. It would be wrong to dismiss the importance of roads, railroads, power plants, mills and the other familiar furniture of economic development. ...But we are coming to realize... that there is a certain sterility in economic monuments that stand alone in a sea of illiteracy. Conquest of illiteracy comes first.[71]

More recently, Coulombe and Tremblay (2005), two Canadian economists, provide empirical evidence that public investment in skills yields more economic benefits than investment in capital infrastructure:

> ...a country's literacy scores rising by one percent relative to the international average is associated with an eventual 2.5% relative rise in labour productivity and a 1.5% rise in GDP [gross domestic product] per head. These effects are three times as great for investment in physical capital.[72]

[71] Galbraith, J.K. (1958). The affluent society. Retrieved December 20, 2007, from http://kenfran.tripod.com/jkgalb.htm.

[72] Coulombe and Tremblay. (2005). Public investment in skills: Are Canadian governments doing enough? p. i.

Coulombe and Tremblay established that improvements in basic literacy produce the greatest economic impact on a society:

> Moreover, the results indicate that raising literacy and numeracy for people at the bottom of the skills distribution is more important to economic growth than producing more highly skilled graduates.[73]

According to Coulombe and Tremblay, "the returns in investment in skills in the form of enhanced economic growth are, in fact, substantial, and may be highly beneficial to society as a whole."[74]

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Literacy and the NWT Economy

NWT Legislature Motion 6-14(3) (2000), which precipitated the NWT Literacy Strategy, acknowledges the effect of improving literacy levels on the economy:

> AND WHEREAS a large percentage of northern residents will be unable to take full advantage of increasing employment opportunities without a long-term commitment to literacy skill development as part of an overall economic and social development strategy.[75]

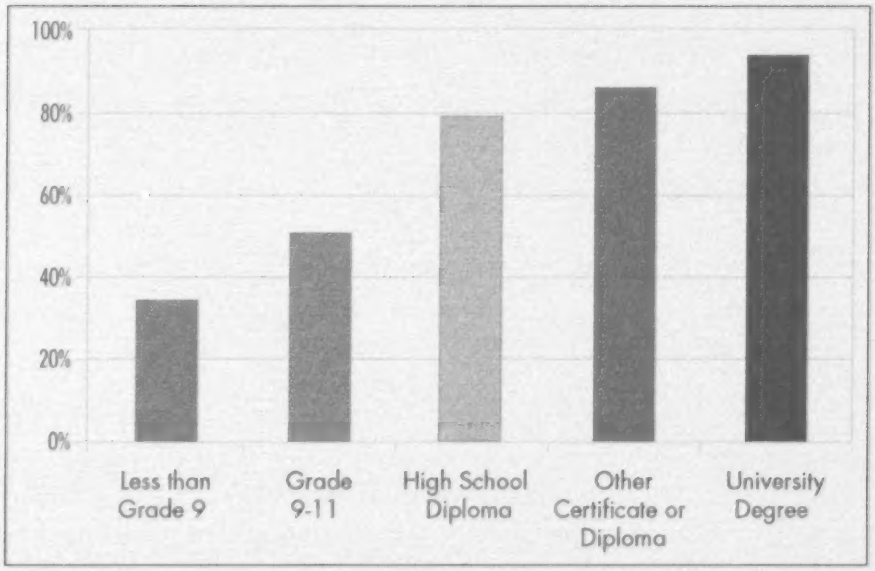
Figure 10 shows a direct correlation between NWT employment rates and education levels. A total of 94.2% of NWT residents over the age of 15 with university education are employed and contributing to the labour market compared to 34.4% of residents with grade nine or less.

[73] Coulombe and Tremblay. (2005). Public investment in skills: Are Canadian governments doing enough? p. i.

[74] Coulombe and Tremblay. (2005). Public investment in skills: Are Canadian governments doing enough? p. 2.

[75] Northwest Territories Hansard, July 7, 2000, p. 615.

Figure 10: Employment Rates by Highest Level of Schooling, NWT, 15+, 2006 [76]



NWT Legislature Motion 6-14(3) also emphasizes the reduction in social costs associated with increased literacy levels:

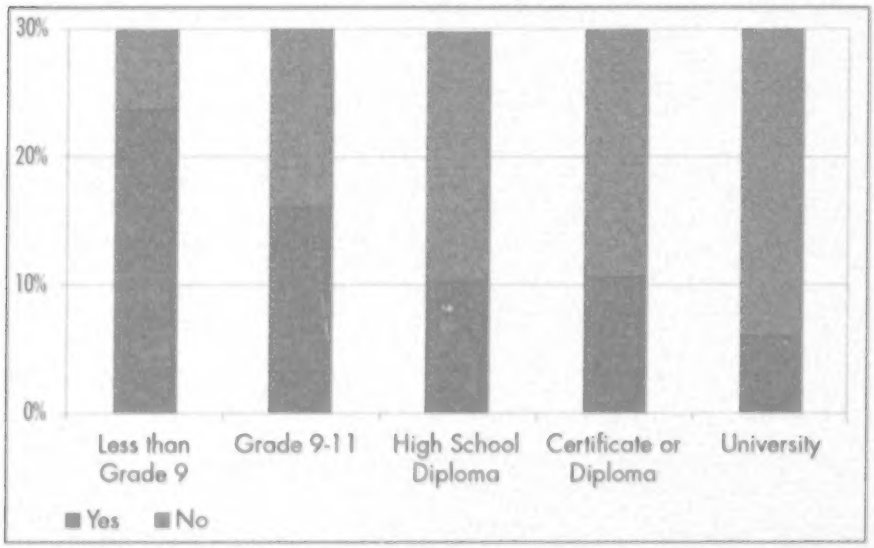
> WHEREAS evidence points to an indisputable link between higher literacy rates and social development in terms of reduced poverty, unemployment, crime, reliance on income support, and improved health and child-rearing practices.[77]

[76] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). NWT annual labour force activity 2006. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Labour/Annual%20Labour%20Force%20Activity/2006%20Annual%20LFS.pdf.

[77] Nortwest Territories Hansard, July 7, 2000, p.615.

As Figure 11 shows, 23.6% of NWT residents over the age of 15 with less than a grade nine education depend on government financial support, as compared to 10.2% of residents with a high school diploma and 6% with a university degree.

Figure 11: NWT 15+, Percentage Who Received Income Assistance or Employment Insurance, by Highest Level of Schooling[78]



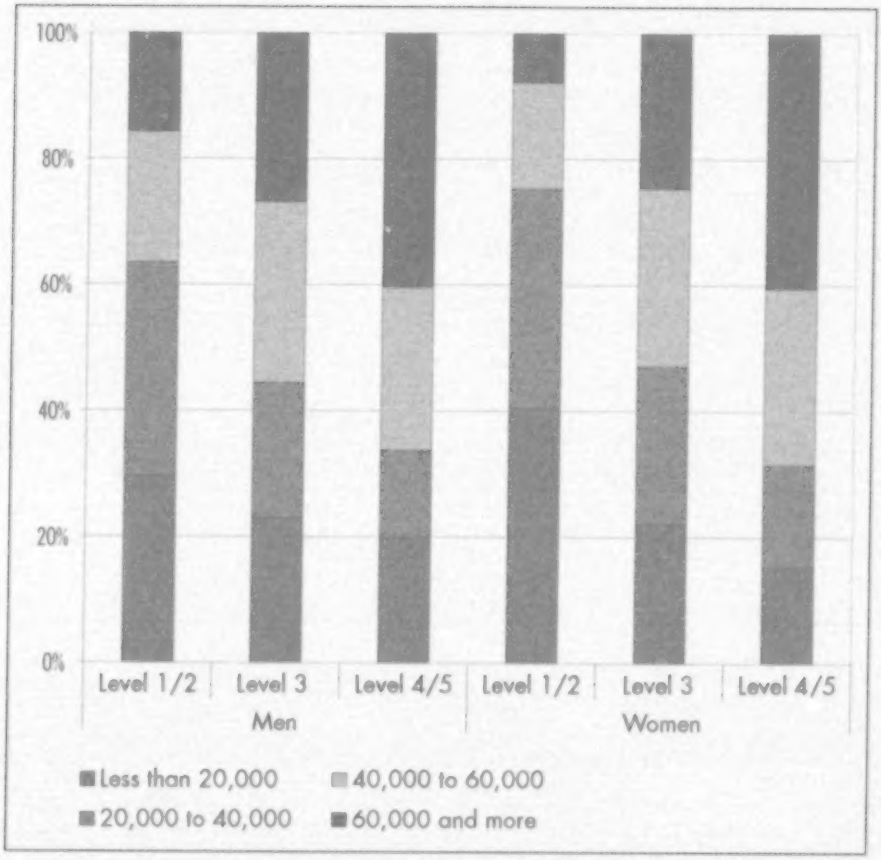
Increased literacy levels lead to increased participation in the labour market, increased tax contributions and reduced social costs, thereby benefiting the NWT overall economy.

Literacy and Socio-economic Status

In addition to the economic benefits afforded to society as a whole, increased literacy levels are associated with increased socio-economic status for individuals. On a national level, higher literacy proficiencies are associated with higher income levels. As illustrated in Figure 12, the trend of literacy levels being a key determinate of income is more pronounced for Canadian women than for Canadian men.

[78] NWT Bureau of Statistics. 2004 community survey.

Figure 12: Distribution of Prose Literacy Levels for Canadian Adults, 16 to 65, by Annual Earnings[79]

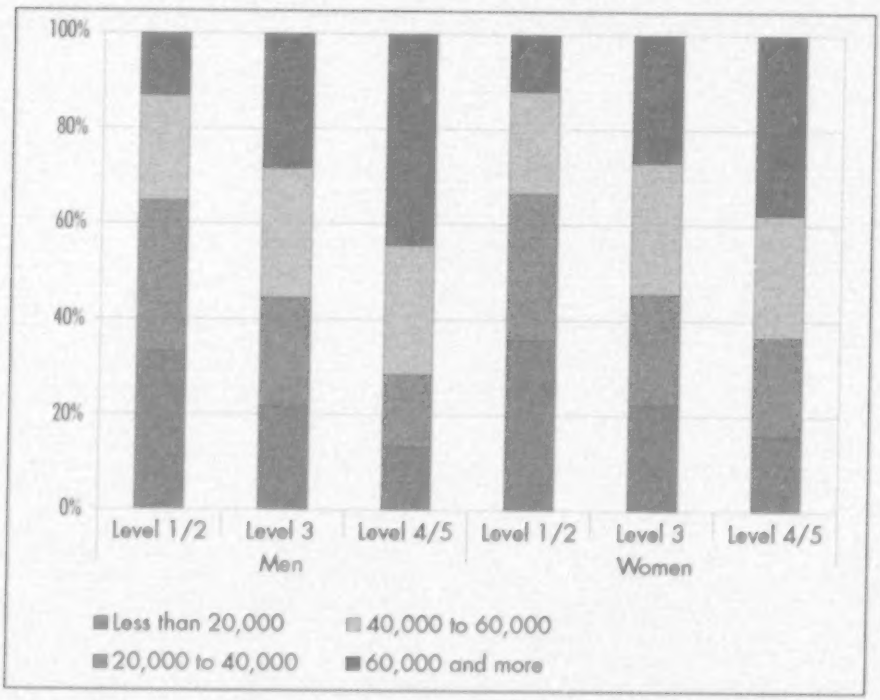


47.4% of Canadian men and 44.2% of Canadian women with an annual income of $20,000 or less are at Level 1 and 2 prose literacy, compared to 25.2% of men and 8.5% of women who earn $60,000 or more. 31.1% of Canadian men and 50.3% of Canadian women who earn $60,000 or more per year are at Level 4/5 prose literacy.

IALSS does not have annual income and literacy data specifically for the Northwest Territories, but we can infer from the data for the three northern territories combined. Figure 13 shows that, in the North, as in the rest of Canada, there is a direct link between annual income and literacy levels.

[79] Data for Figure 12 from Table 4.7A of Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

Figure 13: Distribution of Prose Literacy Levels for Northern Adults, 16 to 65, by Annual Earnings[80]



A larger percentage of Northern men and women with annual incomes of $20,000 or less are below Level 3 prose literacy, compared to national levels. 58.4% of Northern men and 48% of Northern women earning $20,000 or less per year are at Level 1 and 2 prose literacy. Only 23% of Northern men and 16.2% of Northern women at Level 1 and 2 prose literacy earn $60,000 or more, compared to 37.1% of Northern men and 43.1% of Northern women at Level 4/5 prose literacy.

Increased literacy levels benefit society on a macroeconomic and on an individual level. On a macroeconomic level, increased literacy levels positively affect gross domestic product (GDP) and reduce social costs. On an individual level, literacy levels are directly linked to annual income and socio-economic status.

[80] Data for Figure 13 from Table 4.7A of Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

Literacy and the Workplace

Workplace literacy programs are crucial because a significant percentage of adults in the NWT workforce are at Level 1 or 2 literacy, which is below the international standard for functional literacy.

Table 12: Percent Distribution of Employed NWT Adults, 16 to 65, by Skill Level[81]

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Prose	12.4	24.5	39.0	24.1
Document	13.3	24.4	37.8	24.5
Numeracy	17.7	28.0	35.8	18.6
Problem Solving	28.4	38.6	28.1	4.9

Workplace literacy programs support the literacy development of working adults who are unable to take time off to enroll in an ALBE program.

Risk of Skills Loss

NWT adults who regularly use their reading, writing and numeracy skills in the workplace are more likely to retain the skills they develop. The international Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS)[82] makes reference to the "use it or lose it" hypothesis:[83] "Skills are like muscles that need to be exercised in order to be developed and maintained."[84] Individuals can lose their skills and decline in literacy levels throughout the course of their lives:

> ...the development and maintenance of cognitive skills is more complex than simply attending school or achieving a certificate of completion. ...education does not "fix" skills for life.[85]

[81] Data for Table 12 from Table 1.5B of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

[82] The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) is the Canadian component to the international Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS).

[83] Learning a living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. (2005). p. 132.

[84] Learning a living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. (2005). p. 141.

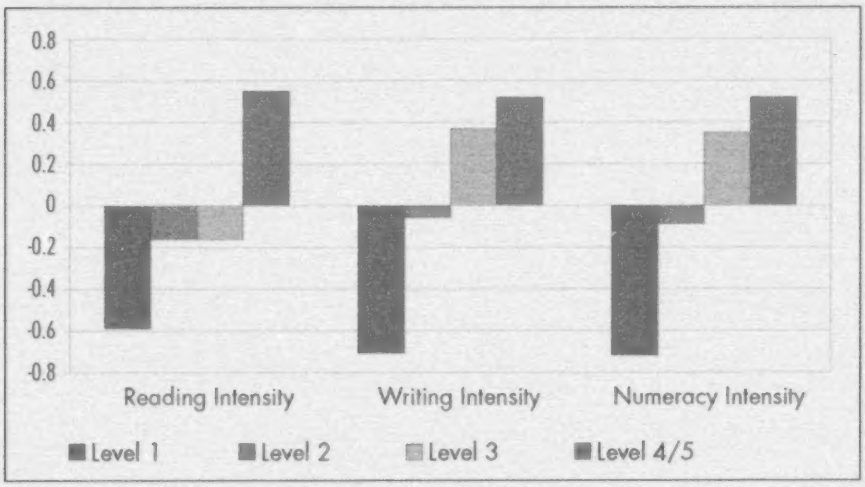
[85] Learning a living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. (2005). pp. 59-60.

The NWT IALSS report accentuates the importance of using literacy skills in the workplace:

> ...people who engage in more literacy and numeracy activities at work tend to have higher proficiency levels.[86]

Figure 14 shows the correlation between using skills at work and document literacy levels.

Figure 14: NWT Reading, Writing and Numeracy Engagement at Work by Document Literacy Level[87]



Level 4/5 NWT adults engage widely in reading, writing and numeracy at work. Level 3 NWT adults have below average[88] reading activities at work, but higher than average writing and numeracy engagement at work. NWT Level 1 adults are especially lacking in opportunities to use reading, writing and numeracy skills at work and, therefore, at greater risk of losing the skills they have.

[86] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2005). p. 24.

[87] Data for Figure 14 from Table 1.7 of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

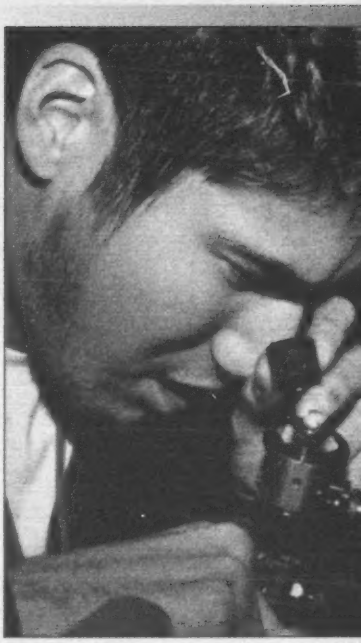
[88] IALSS measures reading, writing and numeracy engagement at work on a scale from -1 to +1, with 0 as the international mean.

Workplace Learning

Many employees engage in informal workplace learning, which includes "such activities as seeking advice from someone knowledgeable, using the Internet or computer software, observing someone performing a task, and consulting books and manuals."[89] Although informal learning is valuable in its contribution to retention of skills, some formal training is necessary to increase literacy levels:

> ...it may not be wise to rely on informal learning alone to substitute for low levels of initial education, or adult education and training. Merely learning in the course of daily life without some systematic prior reinforcement, such as formal education, may not be sufficient for gaining knowledge and skills.[90]

Workplace literacy programs are most effective when they include a formal learning component, which covers foundational skills.



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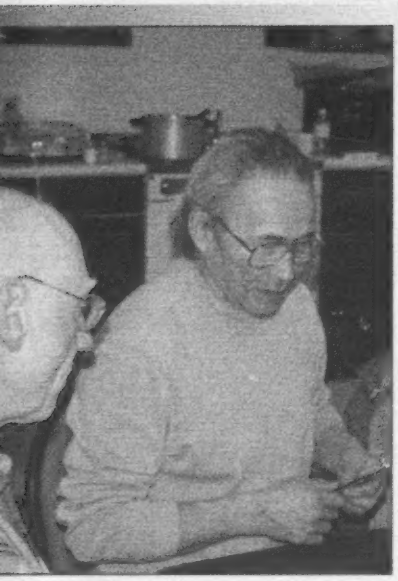
"Workplace literacy programs are most effective when they include a formal learning component, which covers foundational skills."

[89] Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). Unlocking Canada's potential: The state of workplace and adult learning in Canada. p. 11.

[90] Learning a living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. (2005). p. 90.



Workplace Essential Skills

Workplace Essential Skills programs provide opportunities for working adults to acquire foundational skills and improve their basic literacy levels.[91] Workplace Essential Skills are foundational skills common to all occupations rather than job-specific technical skills.

Table 13: Workplace Essential Skills[92]

Reading Text	Reading material in the form of sentences or paragraphs.
Document Use	Tasks that involve a variety of information displays, such as signs, labels, charts, forms, drawings and maps.
Numeracy	Using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks.
Writing	Writing text and writing in documents, such as filling in forms.
Oral Communication	Using speech to give and exchange thoughts and information.
Working with Others	Employees working with others to carry out their tasks.
Thinking Skills	The process of evaluating ideas or information to reach a rational decision.
Computer Use	Using different kinds of computer applications and other related technical tools.
Continuous Learning	Workers participating in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

Workplace Essential Skills are taught using authentic workplace documents specific to different occupations. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) has developed Essential Skills Profiles, which provide details on the type and level of complexity of tasks that use the Workplace Essential Skills, for nearly 200 different occupations.

[91] In response to the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), which revealed low literacy levels among Canadian adults, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) developed resources to support the acquisition of nine Essential Skills in the workplace.

[92] Source: Human Resources and Social Development Canada. (2006). Workplace essential skills. Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/definitions_e.pdf.

Literacy and Immigration

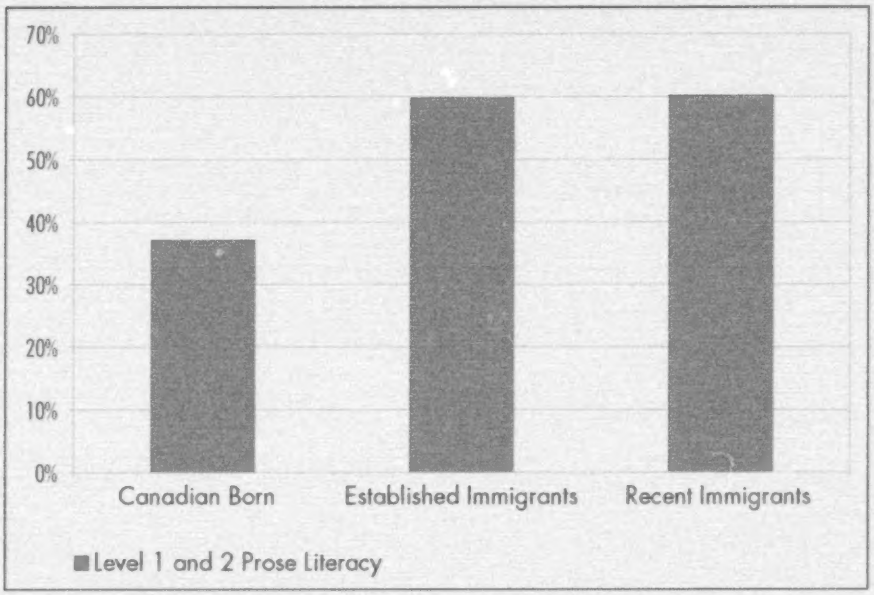
With the skilled labour shortages currently being experienced across Canada, many jurisdictions are turning their attention to immigration to help meet the demands of various sectors in today's labour market. In 2008, Canada plans to admit between 240,000 and 265,000 newcomers as permanent residents. Each newcomer brings different experiences, knowledge and skills to the country and needs to be able to integrate into Canadian society as seamlessly as possible.

In the Northwest Territories, utilizing foreign labour has supplemented the development and growth of some industry sectors, particularly the tourism and secondary diamond industries. The active NWT economy, often exhibiting the highest employment rate in the country, has attracted many new workers to the territory, including immigrants. Immigration numbers in the NWT are low compared to larger jurisdictions. About 100 persons per year obtain their citizenship in the NWT, compared to approximately 16,000 in Alberta, 35,000 in British Columbia and 130,000 in Ontario.

However, the fact remains that newcomers are continuously moving to the NWT to be united with family and friends or to seek employment opportunities. The number of newcomers to the NWT is most likely much higher than the official immigration-landing statistic. Most immigrants arrive in large Canadian cities, such as Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal. There is currently no mechanism to measure secondary migration to other regions of Canada.

A central factor in the successful settlement and retention of newcomers is the attainment of language proficiency in one of the official languages. IALSS data distinguishes between three cohorts: Canadian-born residents, established immigrants (more than 10 years in Canada) and recent immigrants (less than 10 years in Canada). IALSS shows that recent and established immigrants have prose literacy levels well below Canadian-born residents.

Figure 15: IALSS Level 1 and 2 Prose Proficiency by Immigrant Status, Canada, 16 to 65[93]



Some 60.2% of recent immigrants and 59.8% of established immigrants had poor prose literacy (Level 1 and 2) compared to 37.1% of Canadian-born residents.

Immigrant Language and Literacy Programs

A range of language support services is available to newcomers to the NWT: English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and Enhanced Language Training (ELT).

[93] Data for Figure 15 from Table 3.14A of Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey 2003.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)

Under the Integration, Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provides funding for the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program offered at Aurora College to permanent residents. This training, which is funded up to level four on the Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment (CLBA) scale, teaches only basic language skills. High school level English is rated at approximately a level eight on the same assessment scale. The lack of advanced English language training makes it difficult for newcomers to gain choice employment or qualify for further training. The LINC curriculum is themed around settlement and integration.

Rhonda Kennedy

Linguistic Eligibility Determination Assessment

A part-time Linguistic Eligibility Determination Assessment position at Aurora College in Yellowknife is federally funded through ISAP to evaluate language levels and assess learning needs. Language testing is a critical part of the immigration application process and will often determine if applicants can remain in Canada. As well, the assessments directly contribute to how successfully newcomers will integrate into the community. This service is open to all immigrants and is a useful tool for both students and instructors in addressing language needs.

Adult English as a Second Language (ESL)

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) provides funding to Aurora College for English as a Second Language (ESL) training for all adult newcomers regardless of residency status. During the 2007-2008 academic year, four classes were offered in Yellowknife at different times during the week to accommodate varied language levels. There were approximately 32 students accessing these courses.

ESL Classes by the New Canadian and Multicultural Program

The New Canadian and Multicultural Program run by the Centre for Northern Families offers classes to approximately 30 students. Due to capacity limitations, there is a waiting list of approximately ten newcomers wishing to access these classes.

K-12 ESL

Unlike most temporary foreign workers entering Canada, many of diamond polishers brought their families to the NWT. As a result, a large influx of school-age immigrants dictated a need for the development of ESL programming in the school system. Weledeh Catholic School in Yellowknife was host to the majority of newcomers. At the peak period of arrival, the school welcomed 70 immigrant students. Up to two teachers were dedicated to provide English language lessons three periods a week and to teach an advanced writing course to these students. School officials suggested that it would take grade one students up to seven years to catch up with language skills if they had never been exposed to the English language.

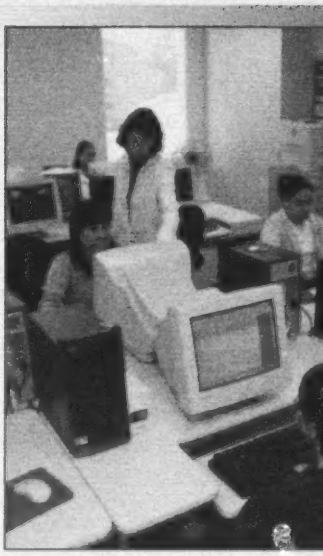
There is currently no ESL programming available at the high school level, with the exception of student-specific instruction for exchange students at École Sir John Franklin in Yellowknife. However, ESL programming is still needed for secondary students whose language skills are weak, whether offered through the school system or within the community.

Enhanced Language Training (ELT)

The ELT program, funded from CIC, is aimed at individuals who have completed ESL training and are ready for the next level. Programs in other jurisdictions tend to be occupation-specific, but there are a variety of existing curricula that are geared for general business or professional occupations.

Some immigrants are taking Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) classes at Aurora College, despite the fact that they may have advanced education from another country. These people are using ALBE classes as an opportunity to practice language skills. ELT classes will more specifically target the language needs of these individuals.

Language and literacy programs are of great value to newcomers. However, consultations with stakeholders have indicated that more coordinated and enhanced services in this area are required to meet their needs. To successfully utilize immigration, sufficient settlement and integration services need to be provided to newcomers, especially with respect to language training and literacy. The NWT should employ all the tools at its disposal to implement a measured and strategic approach to immigrant recruitment. As skill shortages compound, immigration can form one part of an overall labour force development strategy to manage the sustainability of the NWT economy.



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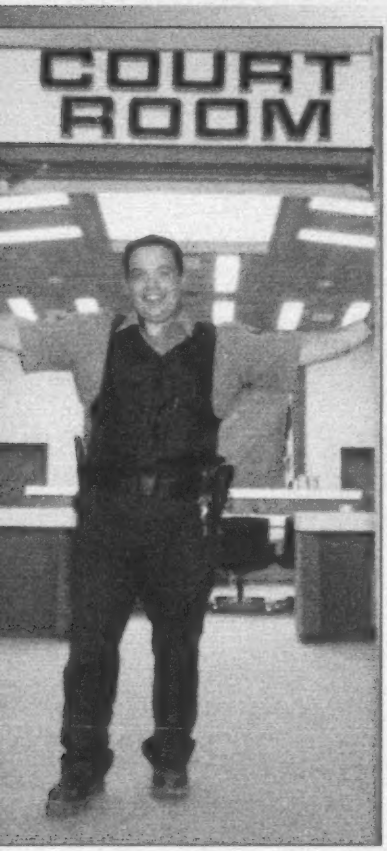


Literacy and Justice

Literacy and justice are linked in several ways. The justice system is heavily steeped in precedent and detailed processes. It is complex and can be difficult to understand even for those with high levels of literacy. Low literacy would present a barrier for participants in criminal, civil or family law matters, whether they are offenders, witnesses, victims or other parties to an action.

A person's ability to navigate the system and observe or participate in the process would be frustrated by low literacy. The system relies largely on formal written law and documentation for presentation to the Court of the many registry and regulatory functions, and for communication of rulings and regulations.

Criminal Justice

Having a low level of education is recognized as one of several contributing factors that increase a person's likelihood of becoming involved in crime. Higher levels of education increase individuals' opportunities to obtain gainful employment and integrate into society, thereby decreasing their likelihood of committing crime. Literacy is a key component of educational success.

Many adult offenders in the Northwest Territories have low education levels. In 2007, 25% of adult offenders entering custody in the NWT had an education level of grade eight or less and a further 12% were unreported.[94] While this is not a measure of literacy skills, it points to lower levels of literacy among NWT offenders. Low literacy skills may impact on Court decisions regarding guilt and incarceration in criminal matters if the accused cannot understand the proceedings or access supports that may be available.

[94] NWT Corrections. (2007). Adult admissions to custody.

Low literacy may continue to present barriers to offenders beyond sentencing. Difficulty in reading and providing input into their own case plans, reports, behavioural contracts and preparations for parole hearings or release requests may cause offenders to be more restricted than would otherwise be the case. In addition, low literacy may hinder an offender's ability to participate or fully understand rehabilitative programming. A rehabilitative program is viewed favourably when inmates apply for release or transfer to a less restrictive setting.

Until root causes of offending behaviour are addressed, rehabilitation of offenders is often unsuccessful. Many inmates lack the literacy skills crucial to successful social adjustment and the employment skills necessary to obtain a job. Literacy training and adult basic education for adult offenders can be effective in reducing risk factors for re-offending by addressing underlying causes of offensive behaviour, such as unemployment, isolation and poverty. In the NWT, inmates face many challenges: lack of employment opportunities in remote communities; shorter custodial stays, which reduce the potential impact of facility programming; and higher numbers of offenders in pre-trial detention, who do not typically access correctional programming. Prison literacy and education programs provide offenders with enhanced life and employment skills that may allow them to function more effectively in mainstream society.

Victims of crime and violence with low literacy have difficulty navigating the system and receiving the justice they deserve. Many factors influence whether victims of crime report the crimes committed against them, including "victim-blaming attitudes" and a fear of poor treatment within the justice system. Low literacy may exacerbate these issues and reduce victims' ability (or comfort level) in accessing supports or services available to victims. Victims with low literacy may have difficulty in writing their own victim impact statements.

It is estimated that 88% of sexual assaults, 69% of household thefts and 67% of personal property thefts in Canada are not reported to the police.[95] Any strategy that enhances the ability of victims to understand and access information regarding their rights and services and supports available to them would likely be effective in reducing unreported crime and increasing victim's confidence in the justice system.

Civil and Family Justice

Individuals with low literacy are more likely to encounter difficulties when dealing with civic and family law as well. People with low literacy who have found ways to cope with their daily routines find it difficult to read legal language because it is much more complicated than everyday reading material.[96] Because they do not fully understand the legal documents involved, people with low literacy may have a reduced ability to participate fully in or understand a variety of legal situations: property disputes, custody battles, rental agreements, lawsuits and financial contracts. Individuals with low literacy are also vulnerable to missing out on legal entitlements, such as child support payments, protection from discrimination and property owners' obligations to maintain and repair rental properties.

The legal system is very complex, and low literacy skills can affect both the process and the outcome, often working in favour of those with good literacy skills. Courts of law are less effective, less efficient and less just when literacy issues are not recognized and addressed. The legal system can be undermined when people do not understand it and lose faith in the process.

[95] Victimization and offending in Canada's territories 2004 and 2005. (2006). Statistics Canada. p.15.

[96] Canadian Council of Administrative Tribunals. (2005). Literacy and access to administrative justice in Canada. Retrieved April 21, 2008, from http://www.ccat-ctac.org/en/pdfs/literacy/Literacyandjustice.pdf. p. 11.

Future Considerations

Increased literacy levels provide individuals with increased opportunities and life choices and decrease the likelihood of becoming involved in crime. A variety of early prevention strategies that include literacy can help reduce the risk factors, such as poverty, unemployment and isolation, that can lead to crime.

Literacy skill development may enable victims of crime, as well as individuals dealing with civic and family law issues, to receive the full benefit of the justice system. Investing in literacy, especially for families and youth at risk, is an effective strategy for crime prevention, safer communities and a more just society.

When individuals with low literacy levels become involved with the justice system, a number of literacy initiatives can be set in place to support them:

- Literacy testing and literacy programs in the correction system;
- Research into inmate literacy levels and needs, and appropriate initiatives to meet identified needs;
- Transition support for inmates to attend literacy and basic education programs when they are released;
- Increase support personnel and other mechanisms for victims of crime with low literacy levels to help keep victims safe;

"Investing in literacy... is an effective strategy for crime prevention, safer communities and a more just society."

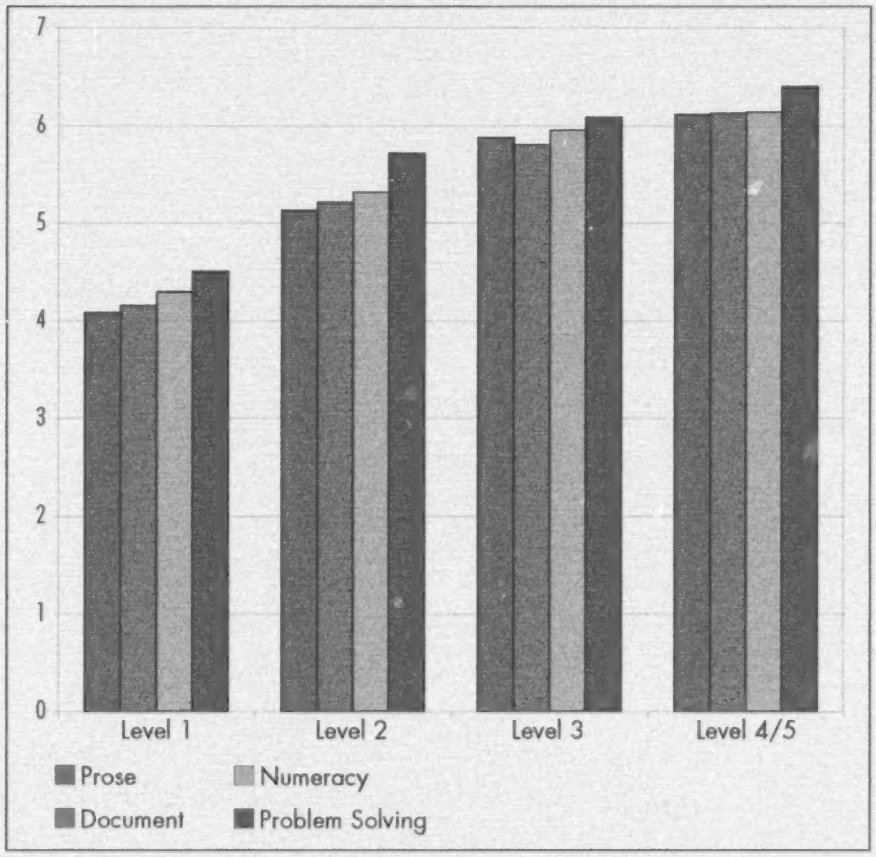
- Provide victims of crime with information about programs and services that can help them and assist with writing victim impact statements;
- Partnerships among justice advocates, legal professionals, literacy organizations and government departments;
- Training and education for criminal justice system gatekeepers (police, lawyers and judiciary) on ways to accommodate people with low literacy levels (and other developmental disabilities) in the criminal justice system;
- Plain language information to help people understand legal documents and processes and become more involved with community justice programs and all aspects of the justice system; and
- Justice-related information presented in other formats, such as audio and visual for people with low literacy levels.

Literacy and Technology

Literacy skills of NWT adults are related to their knowledge and use of computer technology. Literacy proficiency especially increases with the use of computers for task-oriented purposes: writing or editing text, managing accounts and spreadsheets, programming, creating presentations and keeping a schedule or calendar.[97]

IALSS data shows that NWT adults, 16 to 65, who regularly use computers for task-oriented purposes have higher proficiency levels in all skill domains.

Figure 16: Mean Intensity of Computer Use for Task-oriented Purposes by Skill Levels for NWT Adults, 16 to 65[98]



[97] Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2005). p. 102.

[98] Data for Figure 16 from Table 1.10B of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) use in IALSS is measured on a 10-point scale with five as the international mean. NWT working-age adults at IALSS Level 3 have higher than average use of computers for task-oriented purposes. NWT Level 2 adults are slightly above the international mean for task-oriented ICT use, and Level 1 adults are below the international mean.

IALSS also found that NWT adults have less access to computers than in the rest of Canada. Just 66% of NWT adults have a computer at home, compared to 76% of Canadian adults. 58% of NWT adults have Internet access at home, compared to 68% of Canadians. Limited computer access and computer use among NWT adults exacerbates low literacy levels: "...in addition to a digital divide, non-users may also face a literacy challenge."[99] Because technology is so pervasive in today's society, individuals need to be able to read and use information in electronic as well as printed formats. Low literacy NWT adults, who are also unfamiliar with computers and other communication technologies, are doubly disadvantaged.

[99] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 32.

Literacy Partnerships

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Northerners share responsibility for supporting and implementing the Literacy Strategy. Collaborative and coordinated literacy partnerships in the NWT will ensure the success of the Literacy Strategy. The GNWT is investing financial resources towards the Literacy Strategy to ensure public funds are expended in a manner that benefits all Northerners. Literacy programs, services and supports need to be coordinated so that resources are used effectively and efficiently. By eliminating the barriers that separate the literacy community – government, literacy service providers, community groups, industry and people wanting to improve their literacy – we can ensure seamless delivery of services. Strong partnerships will result in limited funds directed toward resources all can use and more relevant supports for learners.

A partnership is a formal relationship for mutual benefit. Partnerships are formed for a variety of reasons:

- Undertake an activity that cannot be done alone;
- Take action and solve problems or share limited resources;
- Ensure different perspectives and commitments are brought to
- bear on a problem;
- Build on activities or projects that have already had successful partnerships;
- Avoid duplication, share clients or simplify access to services;
- Share responsibilities;
- Satisfy a request, often from a funding body; and
- Bring in more money, expertise, infrastructure or people to get a job done.

Partnerships come in different forms, but broadly speaking we can think of partnership as a process based on differences in power relations. Partnership can be more than "consultation." In the context of the Literacy Strategy, partnership means "collaboration" and "co-determination." The NWT has a culturally diverse population and 11 official languages, so strong literacy partnerships must be built on equality, trust and mutual respect.

Successful literacy partnerships have the following common characteristics:

- Each partner is willing to share common goals and to invest in the work of the partnership.
- Partners have a good understanding of local needs and priorities as well as an eye on global or territorial perspectives on labour market issues.
- Partners prioritize literacy skills, life skills, wellness and cross-cultural awareness.
- Partners practice good communications and show good will, trust and respect to each other.
- Partners know their roles, their responsibilities and why they are part of a partnership – all partners work hard to fulfill their responsibilities on behalf of the whole group.
- Partners spend time in discussion to develop a partnership arrangement that meets everyone's needs. They know that agreements help partnerships to focus on roles and responsibilities, milestones, deliverables and monitoring activities.

The GNWT Strategic Plan cites partnerships as a core value in creating a strong and independent North.[100] The ECE Strategic Plan, Building on Our Success: Strategic Plan 2005-2015, underscores the value of collaborative partnerships:

> ECE ensures effective communication with its partners and involves them in decision-making related to its programs and services.[101]

The literacy community has to engage as equal partners to eliminate the inequity and poverty that comes from a lack of basic skills. Through effective, collaborative partnerships, we can achieve our shared vision of a fully literate citizenry throughout the Northwest Territories.

[100] GNWT. (2004). Self-reliant people, communities and Northwest Territories – a shared responsibility: Government of the Northwest Territories strategic plan. p. 8.

[101] Education, Culture and Employment. (2005). Building on our success: Strategic plan 2005-2015. p. 8.

Literacy and Community Development

Literacy is integrally linked with community development. People with higher literacy levels are more actively engaged in contributing to their communities. In turn, increased community capacity creates more opportunities for literacy development. Increasing community capacity for literacy programming creates a win-win situation for individuals and for the community as a whole.

Community development occurs when people come together and take action to improve quality of life in the community. Community residents can work together to address social problems, develop local job opportunities, build their community infrastructure, organize recreational activities or improve their physical environment. NWT community development can be facilitated in several different ways:

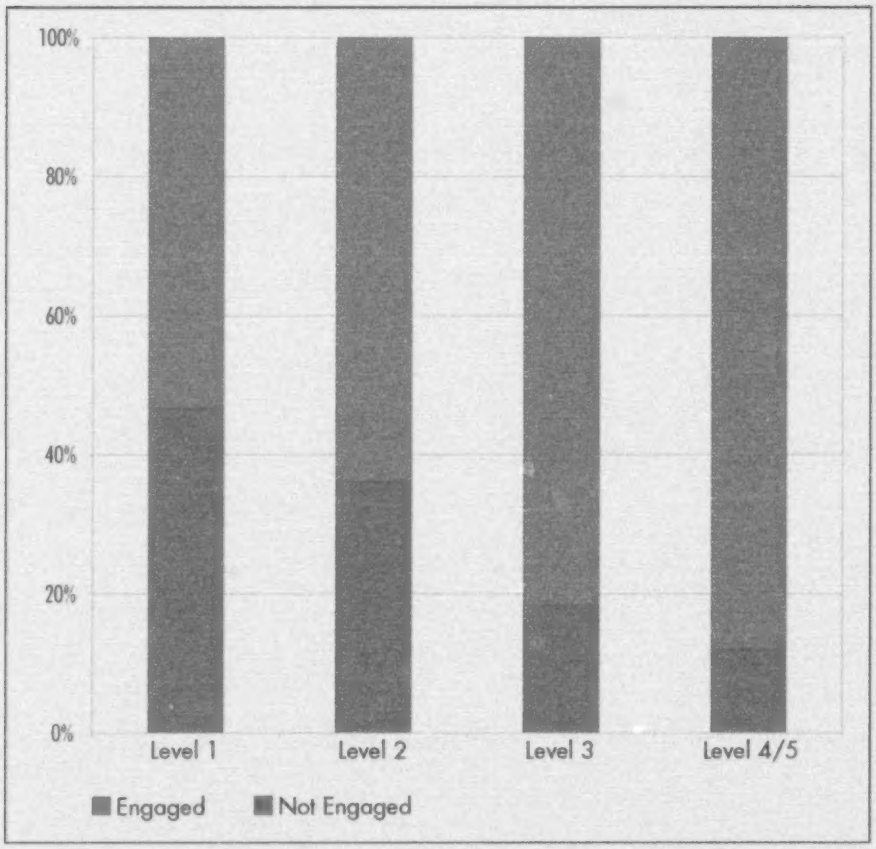
- Speaking out about important issues like the need for a women's shelter;
- Organizing people to take on a task, such as a community feast or spring carnival;
- Providing a service that the community needs like a literacy program or a youth centre; and
- Building capacity of people through community workshops and training.[102]

Community development occurs as people contribute their time and abilities to community projects.

IALSS provides evidence that NWT adults with higher literacy levels are more actively involved in their communities than people with lower literacy levels. IALSS correlates prose literacy levels of NWT adults with participation in community groups and volunteer activities.

[102] NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils. (2002). Tools for community building: A planning workbook for northern community-based literacy. p.15.

Figure 17: Civic Engagement by Prose Literacy Levels, NWT Adults, 16+[103]



[103] Data for Figure 17 from Table 5.2 of Building on our competencies: Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

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Only 53.4% of NWT adults at Level 1 prose literacy engage in community groups and volunteer activities, compared to 81.7% of NWT adults at Level 3 and 88.1% of adults at Level 4/5. NWT adults with higher literacy levels are more likely to participate in activities that contribute to community development.

Learning and innovation are key components of community development. Concerned citizens begin to take action when they become informed about social problems and discover new ways of doing things. Individuals with higher literacy levels are more able to access information and services that contribute to community development. Integrated literacy programs, which involve the whole community, allow people opportunities to increase their literacy levels in the context of overall community development:

> An integrated, community-building approach takes a long-term, holistic view of literacy and learning as connected to other community issues. It prompts a "whole community" perspective on issues that shape literacy learning opportunities, on the premise that literacy is not only the concern of literacy organizations.[104]

A community-building approach to literacy enables people to tackle issues that improve their lives and communities while they are increasing their literacy levels.

[104] Smythe, S. (2005). Learning from the Weaving Literacy project: A report on the process and outcomes of the Weaving Literacy project. p. 6.

CONCLUSION

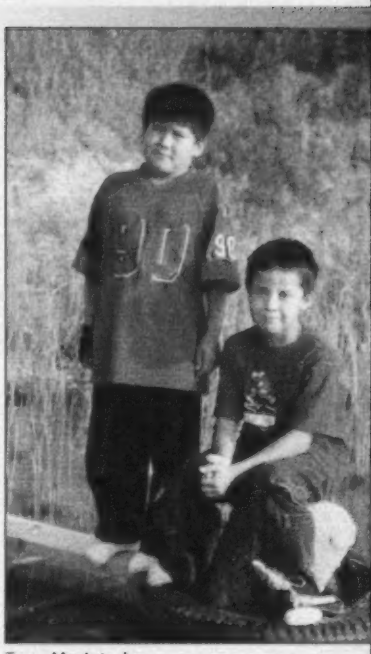
Shared Responsibilities for NWT Literacy Strategy Implementation

Literacy development is a shared responsibility, which involves all sectors of NWT society. All NWT residents can contribute to the implementation of the NWT Literacy Strategy.

- Individuals are responsible to develop and maintain their literacy skills. Individuals can adopt a lifelong learning perspective, improve their skill levels through formal or informal learning, and maintain their literacy skills by using them regularly. Individuals can also support community literacy initiatives and help others to improve their personal literacy levels.
- Families contribute to literacy development by promoting literacy in the home and providing physical and emotional support to relatives who are pursuing learning goals. Parents can pass on the value of learning to their children through everyday interactive activities, including reading and discussions with children. Families can also attend and support family literacy programming in their communities.
- Communities have an active role to play in literacy development. Community organizations can sponsor and support literacy programming. Community interagency groups can actively promote literacy as part of an integrated approach to social issues. Community service organizations can donate time and resources to schools and literacy organizations.
- Educational institutions deliver quality programs, which allow NWT residents of all ages to improve their literacy levels. Educators can create supportive learning environments and impart a love of learning to their students. Educational institutions can also participate in community and family literacy initiatives.

- Governments can identify literacy as a priority and allocate financial and human resources to literacy initiatives. They maintain quality of literacy programming through the development of responsive curricula and educational resources. Governments take a lead role in literacy program planning, coordination and evaluation. Governments also facilitate literacy development by working in partnership with non-governmental organizations, industry, labour and communities.
- Non-governmental organizations share literacy information to educate the public and raise awareness of literacy issues. They advocate for literacy issues locally and nationally. Non-governmental organizations also contribute to NWT literacy development by offering literacy programming, developing literacy resources, facilitating literacy partnerships, building community capacity and training literacy practitioners.
- Libraries foster a love of reading and further learning and serve as community gathering places for literacy-related activities. They provide access to reading material for all age groups, computer technology and research tools. Libraries can also host literacy programs and community activities that promote learning.
- Employers can support literacy skill development by sponsoring workplace literacy programs and providing work release time for their employees. They can also promote literacy in the workplace and support community literacy initiatives. Employers can also work in partnership with governments, educational institutions, labour organizations and non-governmental organizations to identify NWT skill demands and develop training plans.
- Labour organizations can support literacy by advocating for skills development opportunities in the workplace. They can encourage workers to engage in professional development. Labour organizations can also promote lifelong learning in their communications, support community literacy initiatives and participate in literacy partnerships.

Afterword



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The NWT is a land of rich cultural diversity and abundant natural resources. Our thriving economy is creating many new opportunities for NWT residents. The NWT is also at a crossroads in its historic development. There is a risk that people with low literacy levels will be left behind as the NWT moves into an era of unprecedented economic growth. Increases in literacy rates across the entire population are essential for a fair and equitable NWT society.

Literacy has a profound and pervasive impact on NWT society. Literacy, or the lack thereof, impacts people of all ages and permeates every aspect of our society. NWT residents without adequate literacy skills experience challenges participating in the labour market, earning sufficient income, managing their own health and contributing to community development. Low literacy is frequently associated with a cycle of unemployment, poverty, inequity, poor health, addictions, crime and social isolation. Effective literacy interventions are a key component in breaking this tragic cycle and empowering NWT people to become self-reliant and healthy.

The NWT Literacy Strategy addresses the needs of NWT residents of all ages in the various roles they play at home, in the workplace and in the community. Achievement of the NWT Literacy Strategy goals, objectives and actions will require collaborative partnerships involving all sectors of NWT society. Investing human and financial resources into the NWT Literacy Strategy will yield substantial social, political and economic benefits for NWT society as a whole. More importantly, increased literacy levels will translate into renewed hope, expanded opportunities and improved quality of life for NWT individuals, families and communities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: NWT Demographic Profile

Northwest Territories demographic statistics paint a picture of increasingly acute skills shortages precipitated by an aging workforce, rapid economic growth and low literacy levels. The demographic context for the NWT Literacy Strategy underscores the urgency of the need for literacy interventions, which would enable more NWT residents to fulfill their potential, access the labour market and fully participate in society.

Regional Population Distribution

The Northwest Territories (NWT) population of 41,861 is almost equally divided between Aboriginal (51.1%) and non-Aboriginal (48.9%) residents.[105] Education and employment trends in the Northwest Territories reflect this ethnic mix in the population.

Almost one-third (32.8%) of the NWT population lives in one of the 29 smaller communities (population less than 2,000), and the majority of the residents in the smaller communities are Aboriginal. Although birth rates are higher in the smaller communities than in Yellowknife and the regional centres, birth rates have been declining in all NWT regions. The higher birth rate in smaller communities has balanced the out-migration to Yellowknife and the regional centres for education and employment, creating a stable population over the past ten years.

Just under one-quarter (22.5%) of the NWT population lives in Fort Smith, Hay River or Inuvik. Young people often move to these regional centres to further their education and seek better employment opportunities. As regional centre residents become better educated and gain work experience, they often relocate for better job prospects. In-migration from communities is offset by out-migration from the regional centres to Yellowknife or to other parts of Canada, creating a slight decline in population in the regional centres.

[105] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). Community totals 1996 to 2006. Retrieved September 21, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Demographics/population/est_data/commtotal.xls.

Yellowknife comprises 44.7% of the NWT population. Yellowknife has the most transient population, with families moving in and out depending on employment opportunities. Yellowknife's rapid population growth has already exceeded the 2000 population projection of 44% by 2019. 2006 population projections expect Yellowknife to grow to 47% of the total NWT population by 2021.[106]

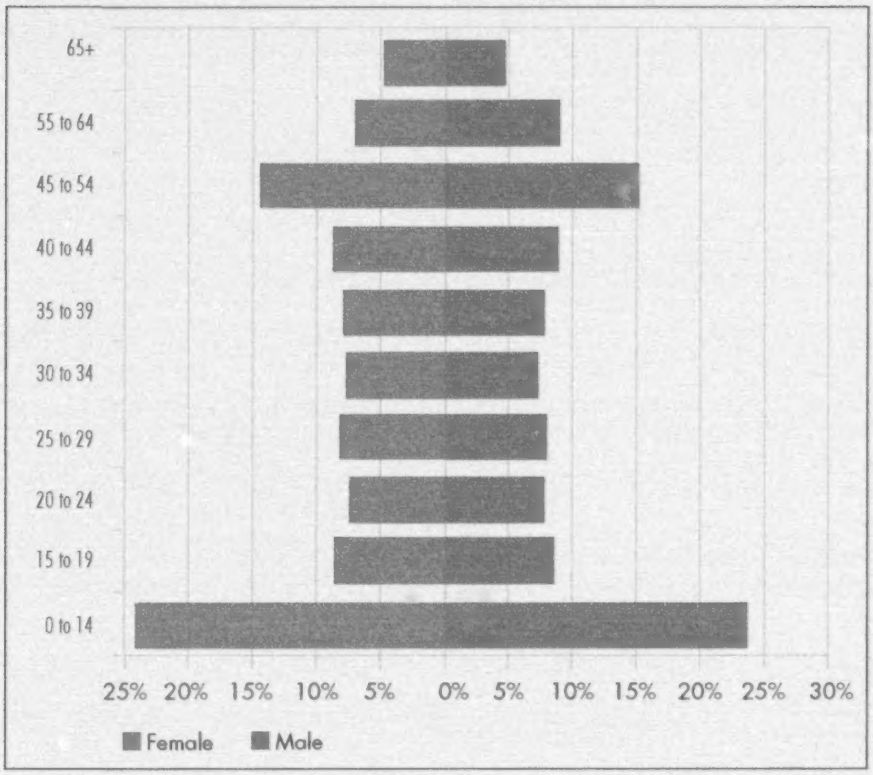
Age and Ethnicity

The NWT is the second youngest jurisdiction in Canada (behind Nunavut), with 24.2% of the population under the age of 15.[107] The NWT Population Age Pyramid Inukshuk demonstrates the two largest segments of the NWT population, 0 to 14 and 45 to 54, and the equal distribution of males and females in all age groups. Of particular concern is the 45 to 54 population bulge, which indicates that a large portion of the NWT workforce will be retiring within the next 10 years, placing further strain on the labour market.

[106] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). Community totals 1996 to 2006. Retrieved September 21, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Demographics/population/est_data/commtotal.xls.

[107] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). Population estimates as at July 1, by ethnicity and age group, Northwest Territories, 2006.

Figure 18: Northwest Territories Age Pyramid Inukshuk, 2006[108]



The 0 to 14 population bulge is 60.5% Aboriginal. Only 39.5% of NWT children are non-Aboriginal. The greatest portion of non-Aboriginal people is working age, with 59.9% between the ages of 25 and 54 years. The Aboriginal population is very young by comparison, with children and youth under the age of 25 comprising 48% of the total population.

In the smaller communities, 87% of the population is Aboriginal. Overall, 46% of the people living in communities are under the age of 25. In contrast, 65% of non-Aboriginals in the smaller communities are between the ages of 25 and 59. This 65% generally reflects the professional workforce made up of people employed as nurses, teachers and the RCMP. In the smaller communities, 10% of the population is over 60.

[108] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Census: age and sex. Retrieved May 15, 2008, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Census/census%2006/Age%20and%20Sex_2006.pdf. p. 2.

The overall population of the regional centres of Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik is more evenly distributed between Aboriginal (51%) and non-Aboriginal people (49%). For specific age groups, however, this distribution shows greater variation. For the total population, 39% are children and youth under the age of 25. In the regional centres, 47% of Aboriginals are children and youth under the age of 25, compared to 29% of non-Aboriginals. In Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik, 60% of non-Aboriginals are working age adults, aged 25 to 59, compared to 45% of Aboriginals. In the regional centres, 11% of the non-Aboriginal population is seniors over the age of 60, compared to 8% of Aboriginals.[109]

In Yellowknife, 77% of the total population is non-Aboriginal. The overall population represents a diversity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal languages and cultures. Yellowknife has a proportionally larger workforce and more employment opportunities than either regional centres or the smaller NWT communities. Over half (56%) of the Yellowknife population is working-age adults between the ages of 25 and 59. In Yellowknife, 59% of non-Aboriginal residents are working age, compared to 45% Aboriginals. In contrast, 51% of Yellowknife Aboriginals are children and youth under the age of 25, compared to only 35% of non-Aboriginals. Only 5% of the Yellowknife population is 60 years or older.

Although the population of the NWT is still young in comparison to other parts of Canada, it is aging. An aging workforce, together with an expanding economy and increased employment opportunities, will likely result in skills shortages in the NWT labour market. Over the next few years, there will be a need to expand opportunities for secondary and post-secondary education. There will be an even greater need to increase access to employment training as the NWT population matures.

[109] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Population estimates as at July 1, by age group and ethnicity, Northwest Territories 2006.

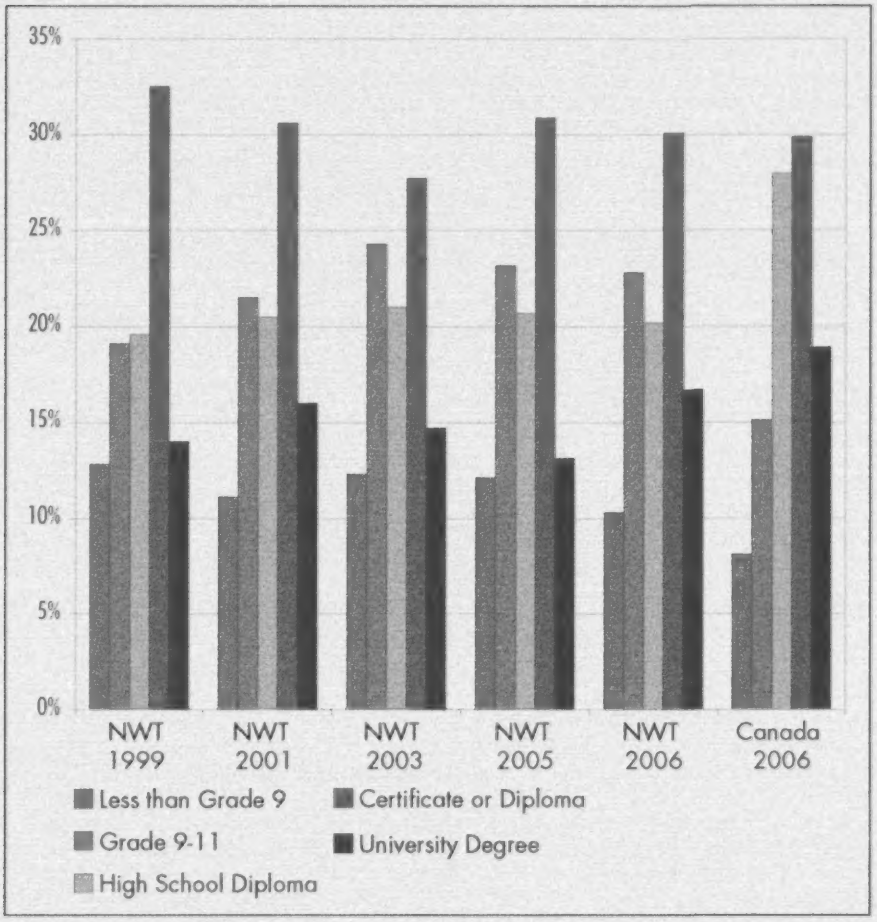
General Trends in Educational Attainment

Education levels for NWT residents over the age of 15 have remained fairly consistent since the 1999 division of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The percentage of people with less than grade nine has declined from 12.8% (1999) to 10.3% (2006), while the percentage of NWT adults with grade nine to 11 has risen from 19.1% (1999) to 22.8% (2006). Percentages of NWT residents over 15 with a high school diploma as their highest level of schooling have increased slightly from 19.6% in 1999 to 20.2% in 2006. NWT certificate or diploma percentages have decreased slightly from 32.5% (1999) to 30.1% (2006), while people with university degrees have increased from 14% (1999) to 16.7% (2006).

In 2006, more NWT adults had less than grade nine or grade nine to 11 (33.1%) as their highest level of schooling than in the rest of Canada (23.2%). Fewer people in the NWT had a high school diploma as their highest level of education than in the rest of Canada (20.2% compared to 28%). The percentage of NWT residents with a certificate or diploma (30.1%) was equivalent to the rest of Canada (29.9%). The percentage of people in the NWT with a university degree (16.7%) is slightly below Canada's rate (18.6%).[110]

[110] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2007). NWT labour trends. [On-line]. Retrieved October 10, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Labour/Labour%20Trends/Labour_trends.html.

Figure 19: Highest Level of Schooling, 15+, NWT and Canada, 1999 to 2006[111]



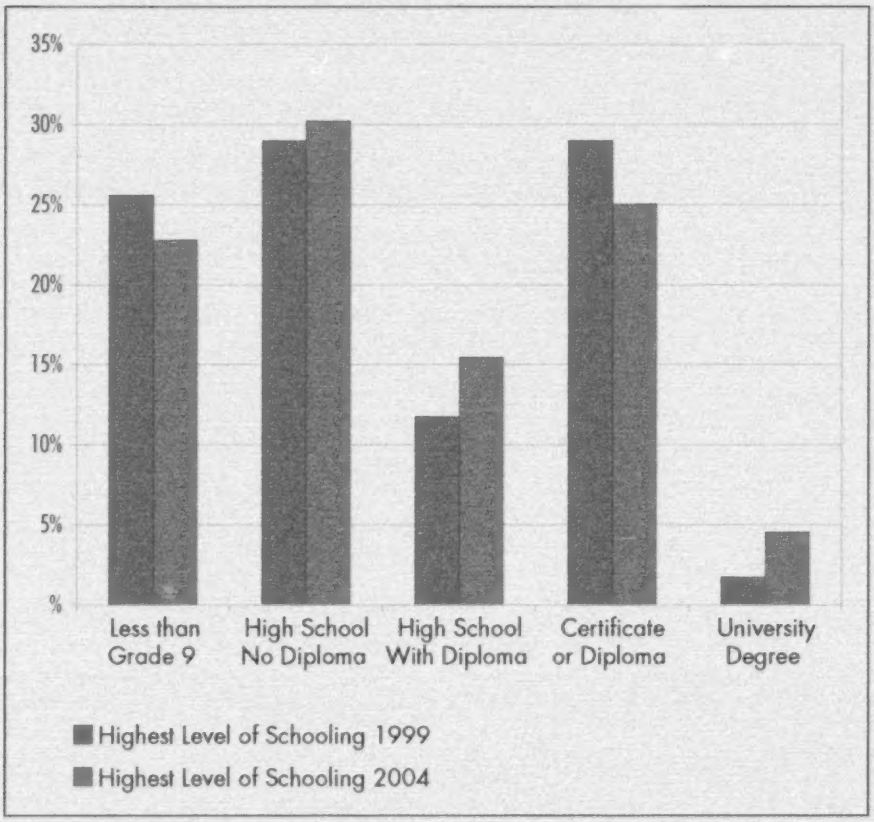
[111] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2007). NWT labour trends. [On-line]. Retrie: ed October 10, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Labour/Labour%20Trends/Labour_trends.html.

Educational Attainment by Ethnicity

Significant differences exist between educational attainment levels of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the NWT. These differences are due in part to the historical lack of access to education in the NWT. In addition, large numbers of non-Aboriginal people who migrate to the NWT for employment opportunities bring with them higher levels of education. Of the total population 15 years old and over, 21.7% are non-Aboriginals who have lived in the NWT five years or less.

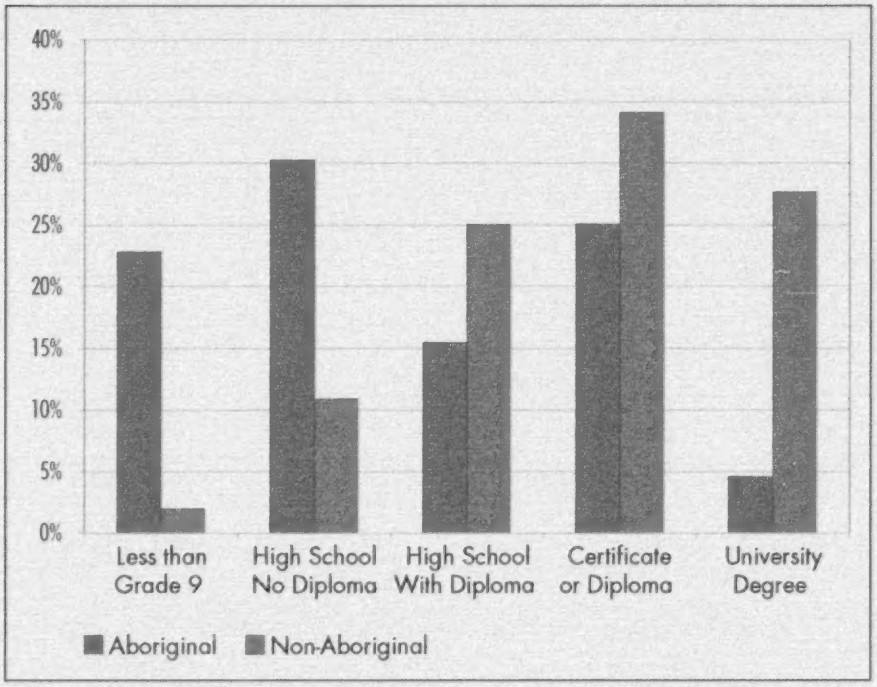
Aboriginal people of the NWT are currently making strides in educational attainment at the high school and post-secondary levels. The percentage of Aboriginal adults with less than grade nine has decreased from 12.8% in 1999 to 11.6% in 2004. The percentage of Aboriginal adults with a high school diploma as their highest level of education rose from 11.7% in 1999 to 15.4% in 2004. The percentage of NWT Aboriginals with university degrees more than doubled from 1999 (1.8%) to 2004 (4.6%).

Figure 20: NWT Aboriginal Educational Attainment, 15+, 1999 and 2004



However, overall Aboriginal education levels show a striking difference to non-Aboriginal levels: 53% of Aboriginal adults have less than a high school diploma as their highest level of schooling, compared to 12.9% of non-Aboriginals. Only 4.6% of Aboriginal adults have a university degree compared to 27.7% of non-Aboriginal people. More closely aligned are the percentages of people with a certificate or diploma, which includes trades and other certificates or diplomas at a college level. 25.1% of Aboriginal adults have a certificate or diploma compared to 34.1% of non-Aboriginal adults.

Figure 21: NWT Educational Attainment by Ethnicity, 15+, 2004[112]



The inequity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal levels of educational attainment has serious implications for the future of the NWT labour market. Children, 0 to 14, are the largest segment of the NWT population (24.2%). In 15 years, this age cohort will comprise a large portion of the labour market because most people in the second largest segment of the population (ages 45 to 54) will be retired. 60.5% of the 0 to 14 age segment is Aboriginal. To meet the needs of the future NWT labour market, it is vital to increase Aboriginal educational attainment levels.

[112] Data for Figures 19 and 21 from NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Highest level of schooling, by ethnic group, Northwest Territories 1989 to 1999. NWT labour force survey.

Educational Attainment by Gender

Current postsecondary enrollment trends in the NWT reflect a national trend of more females than males obtaining postsecondary education. NWT females are surpassing the male rate for university degrees.

More males than females have certificates or diplomas as their highest level of education, a trend that can be attributed to low percentages of women in trades. In 2004, 26.9% of Aboriginal males had a certificate or diploma as their highest level of education, compared to 23.1% of Aboriginal females. 39.4% of non-Aboriginal males and 28% of non-Aboriginal females had a certificate or diploma.

In 2004, 18.7% of NWT females had university degrees, compared to 15.4% of males. Percentages of non-Aboriginal females with university degrees (29.8%) are close to the rates for non-Aboriginal males (25.8%). However, the percentage of Aboriginal females with university degrees (6.6%) is more than double the rate for Aboriginal males (2.5%).[113]

[113] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Highest level of schooling by gender and ethnicity, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

Educational Attainment by Community Type

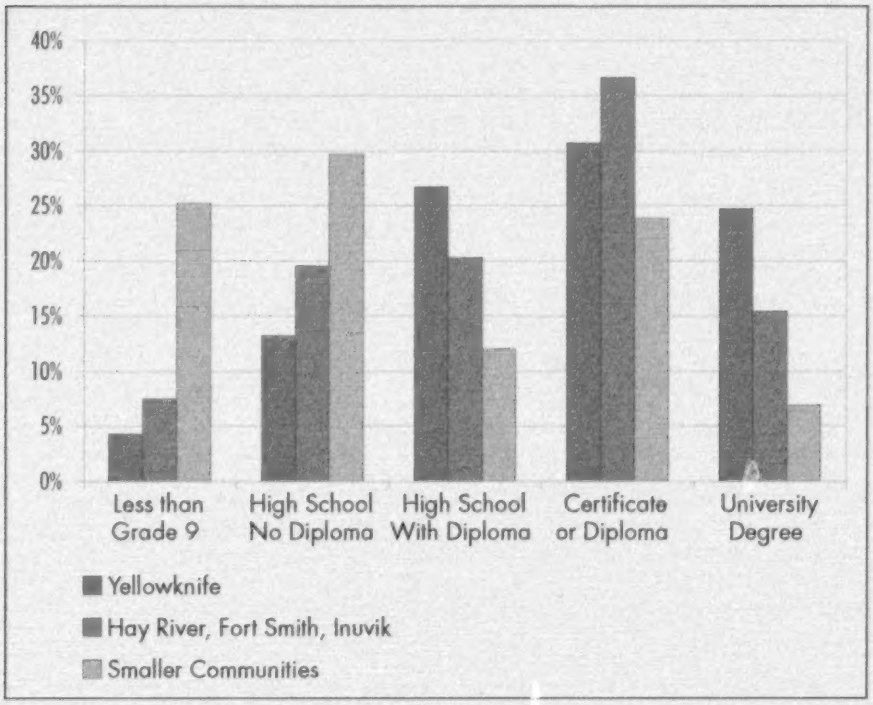
In grouping NWT communities according to size, differences in education levels reflect the percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations found in each community type.

Yellowknife has the highest percentage of people with university degrees and the lowest percentage of people with less than grade nine. The largest community in the NWT also has the highest percentage of non-Aboriginal people. In Yellowknife, 80.7% of the total population over the age of 15 years old is non-Aboriginal.

Education levels for the regional centres of Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik fall between Yellowknife and the smaller communities. Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik have almost evenly split Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, with 48.6% of the total population over the age of 15 years Aboriginal and 51.4% non-Aboriginal.

The remaining, smaller communities have the lowest levels of university degrees and the highest levels of people with less than grade nine. The smaller communities also have the highest percentage of Aboriginal people: 83.5% of the total population over the age of 15 years old is Aboriginal.

Figure 22: Educational Attainment by Community Type, NWT 15+, 2004 [114]



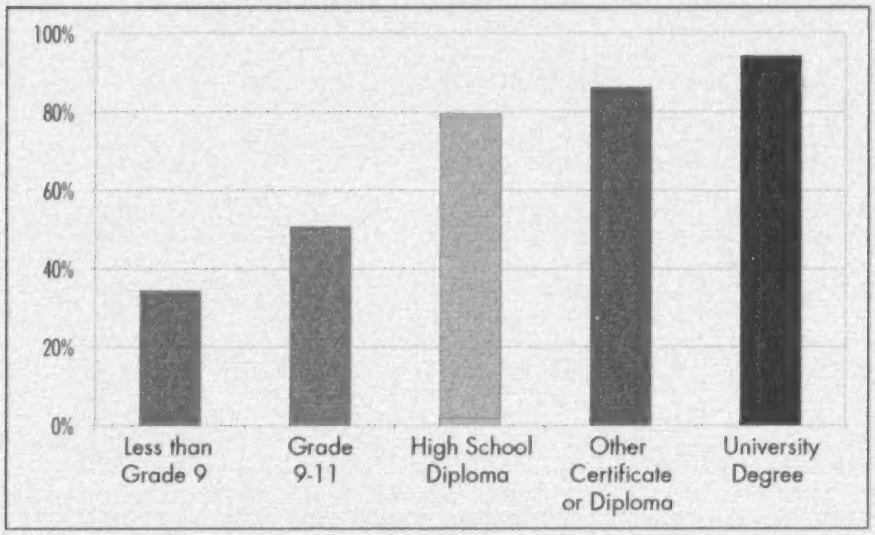
Educational Attainment and Employment

The NWT economy has benefited from rapid expansion of the mining and oil and gas industries. In 2006, 77.5% of the population over the age of 15 was in the labour force, and 94.6% of the labour force was employed. Even with a booming economy and abundant job opportunities, employment prospects in the Northwest Territories are directly linked to educational attainment. People with a university degree have a 94.2% employment rate, while those with less than grade nine have a 34.4% employment rate. 79.4% of people with a high school diploma and 86.2% of those with a certificate or diploma are employed. Significant differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education levels are reflected in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal labour force participation and employment rates.

[114] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Highest level of schooling, by community type and selected characteristics, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

Non-Aboriginals have a labour force participation rate of 88.3% and an employment rate of 86.7%, compared to a labour force participation rate of 62.6% and an employment rate of 55% for Aboriginals.[115]

Figure 23: Employment Rates by Educational Attainment, NWT 15+, 2006[116]



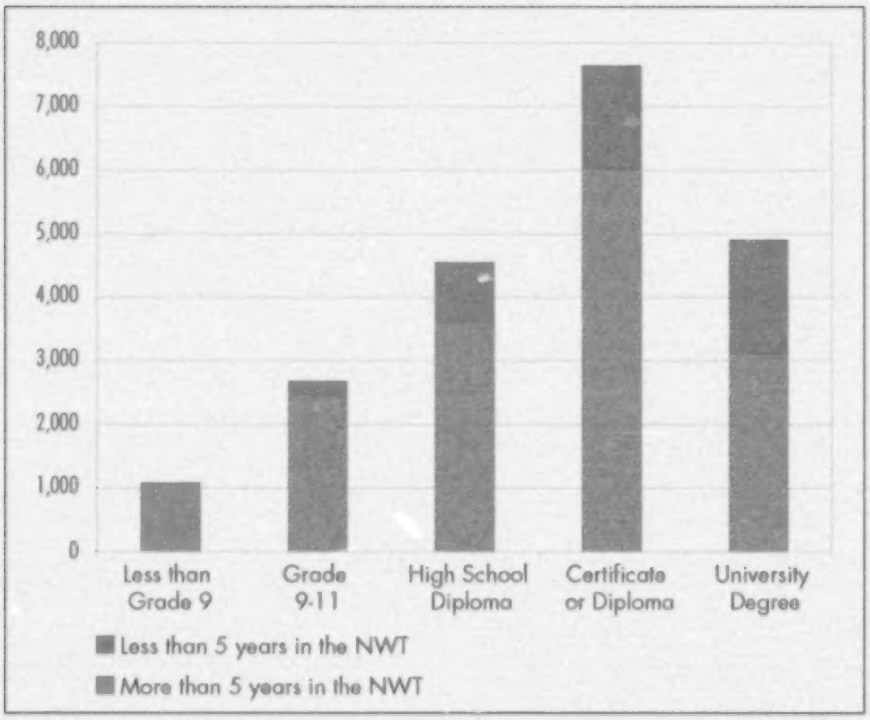
Because of a historical lack of access to education, the NWT was not able to meet labour market demands without importing skilled labour from southern Canada and other nations. People who moved to the NWT to fill labour market demands brought with them higher levels of education and corresponding higher levels of employment. This trend continues, with the 2004 NWT Labour Force Survey indicating that 21.7% of employed NWT residents have lived in the NWT less than five years.[117]

[115] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). NWT annual labour force activity 2006. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Labour/Annual%20Labour%20Force%20Activity/2006%20Annual%20LFS.pdf.

[116] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). NWT annual labour force activity 2006. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Labour/Annual%20Labour%20Force%20Activity/2006%20Annual%20LFS.pdf.

[117] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Employed persons, by residency and highest level of schooling, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

Figure 24: Employed Persons, by Residency and Highest Level of Schooling, NWT 15+, 2004 [119]



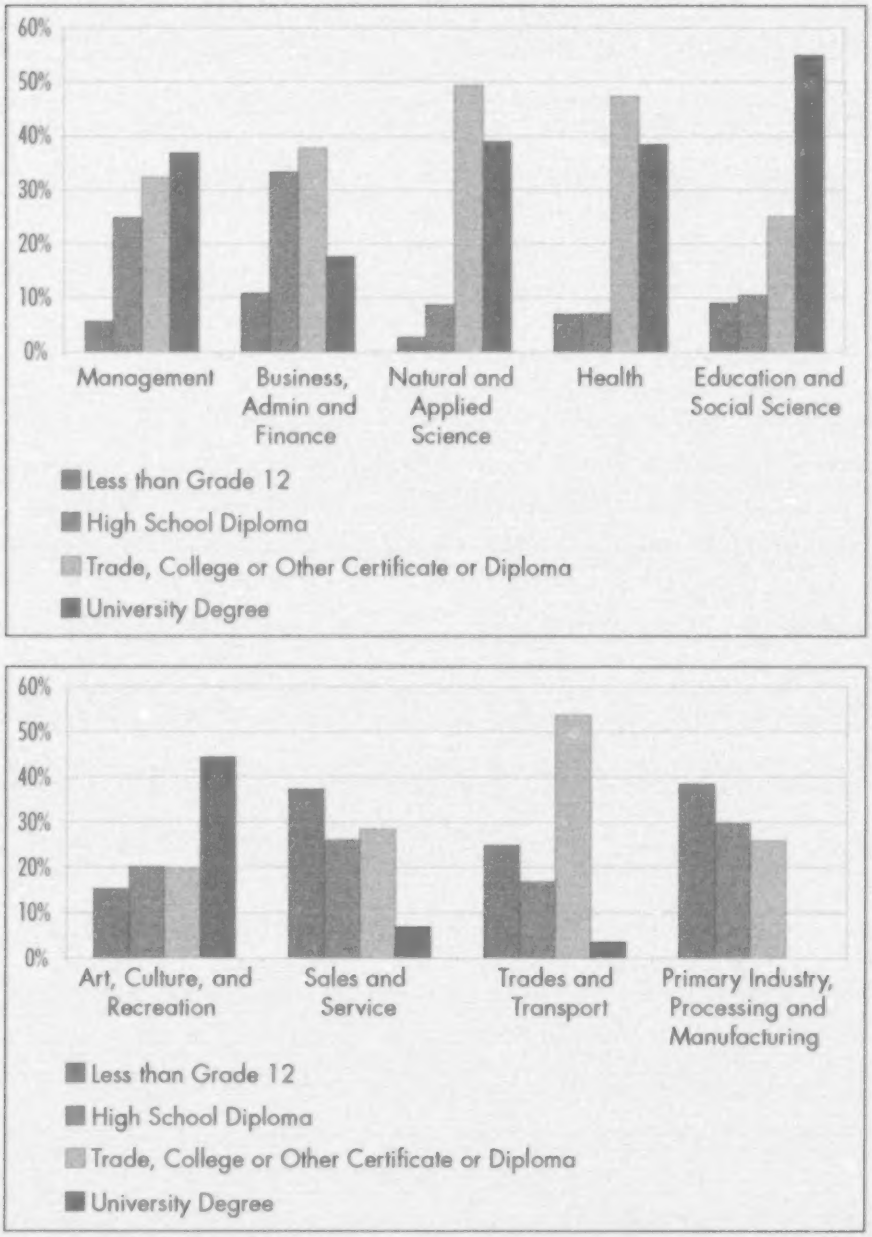
Of the 4,615 jobs filled by persons with a residency of less than five years in the NWT, persons with a postsecondary education credential filled 3,407 of the jobs (73.8%). The vast majority (94.2%) of employed people who have lived in the NWT less than five years have at least a high school diploma.

The highest level of schooling of employed persons in major occupations in the NWT emphasizes the importance of completing postsecondary education. NWT residents with a postsecondary education hold 69.2% of all management, 80.2% of social science and education, 88.4% of natural and applied science, 85.8% of all health, 64.1% of art, culture and recreation, and 57.3% of trades and transport occupations.[120]

[119] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Employed persons, by residency and highest level of schooling, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

[120] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Employed population, by occupation and highest level of schooling, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

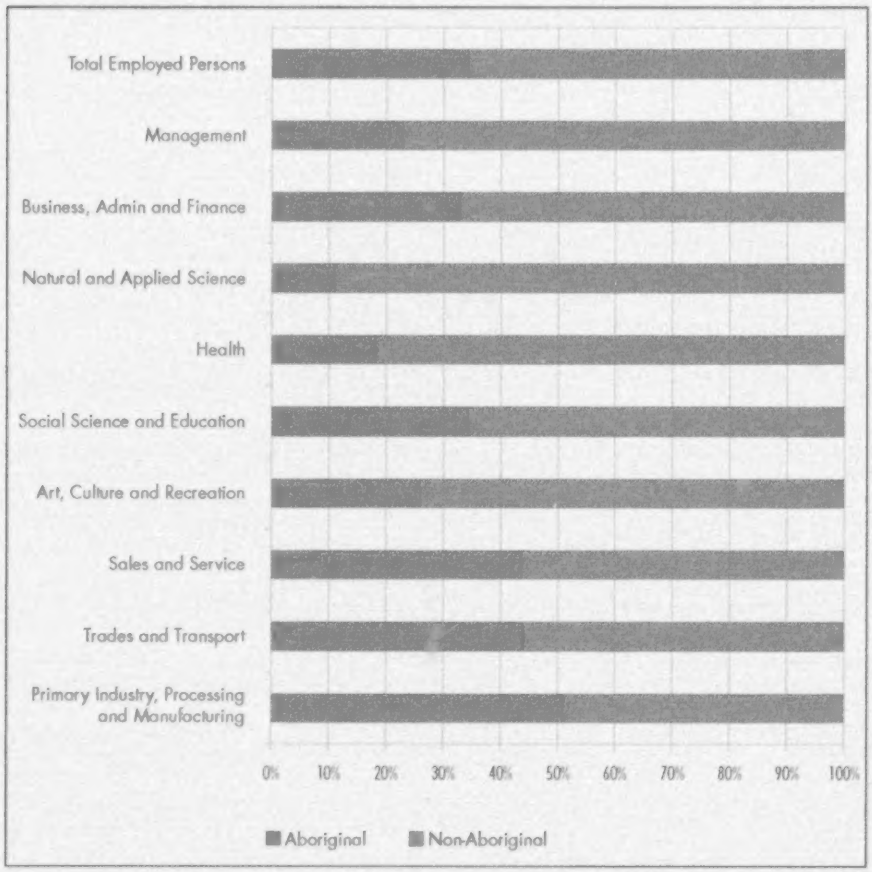
Figure 25: Employed Population, by Occupation and Highest Level of Schooling, NWT 15+, 2004[120]



[120] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Employed population, by occupation and highest level of schooling, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

Education differences contribute to the types of jobs held by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the NWT. Figure 26 illustrates the disproportionate percentages of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people found in specific occupations. Aboriginal people are under-represented in occupations such as management, natural and applied science, social sciences and education, art, culture and recreation and health. Other occupations, such as primary industry, processing and manufacturing, employ a higher percentage of Aboriginal people than the percentage of Aboriginal people in the total employed population.

Figure 26: Employed Population, by Occupation and Ethnicity, NWT 15+, 2004[121]



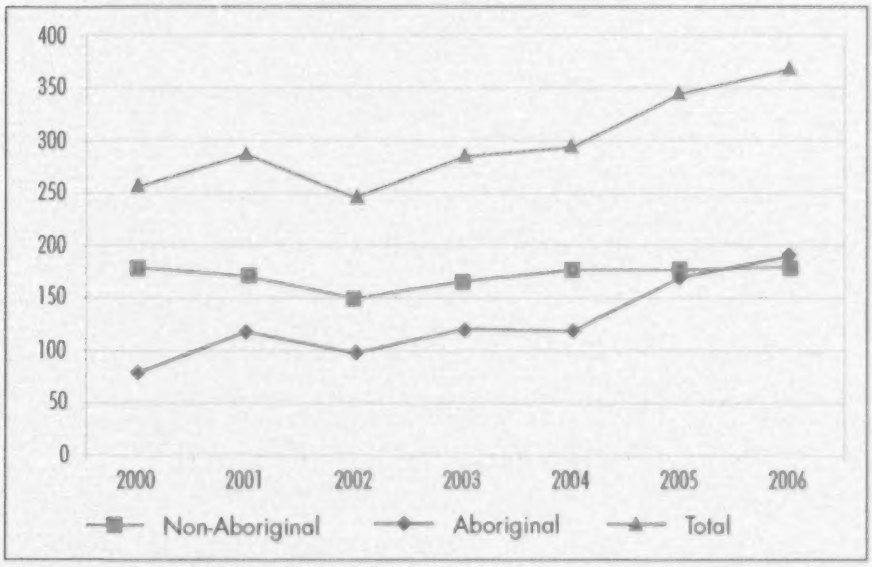
[121] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2004). Employed population, by occupation and ethnicity, Northwest Territories, winter 2004.

Secondary School Enrollment and Graduation

Senior secondary school enrollment continues to increase in the NWT, as more students stay in school after the mandatory age of 15 and other students who left school are returning to school or college to further their education. This increase is largely attributed to the implementation of grade extensions. In 2000, 2,168 youth were enrolled in grade 10 to 12, representing 21.9% of the total school enrollment. By 2006, senior secondary enrollments had risen to 2,572, representing 27.5% of the school population.[122]

Grade extensions in smaller NWT communities have also increased numbers of NWT high school graduates.

Figure 27: NWT High School Graduates, 2000 to 2006, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal [123]



As Figure 27 shows, the increase in NWT graduates can be attributed to the increasing numbers of Aboriginal graduates. Numbers of non-Aboriginal graduates have remained steady since 2000, while numbers of Aboriginal graduates have risen sharply.

[122] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). School enrollment, Northwest Territories. Retrieved November 14, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Education/Enrollment_Graduates.html.

[123] NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2006). School enrollment, Northwest Territories. Retrieved November 14, 2007, from http://www.stats.gov.nt.ca/Statinfo/Education/Enrollment_Graduates.html.

Appendix B: NWT IALSS Results

Conducted in 2003, the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) is the Canadian component of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) study.[124] Seven countries participated in the first round of ALL testing: Bermuda, Canada, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, United States and the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon. Other nations are in the process of gathering ALL data.

Previous data, including that used for the 2000 Literacy Strategy, was based on a proxy indicator, using educational attainment of grade nine or less as a benchmark for low literacy. The 2003 IALSS provides direct measures of adult literacy skills and data on a range of labour market-related skills. For the first time, the NWT has accurate information on actual skill levels of adults, 16 and above.

IALS, ALL and IALSS

ALL and IALSS build upon the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). There is understandable confusion about IALS/ALL/IALSS terminology:

- IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) – 1994 survey, which did not include the NWT.
- ALL (Adult Literacy and Life Skills) – 2003 international survey. The study is referred to as ALL in all nations except Canada.
- IALSS (International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey) – Canadian component of the 2003 ALL international survey.

In 1994, nine countries, including Canada, participated in IALS. The Canadian sample was about 6,000. The northern territories were not included in the survey. By 1998, 22 countries had participated in IALS, covering 10.3% of the world's population and 51.6% of the world gross domestic product (GDP). IALS measured proficiencies of adults, 16 and over, in the areas of prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy.

[124] Agencies responsible for development and management of the ALL study include Statistics Canada, Educational Testing Services, United States National Center for Educational Statistics, Organization for Educational Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The Canadian sample for the 2003 IALSS study was about 23,000 – a much more thorough study. The Northwest Territories was included in this survey, with a sample of over 900. IALSS prose and document literacy scales are identical to the 1994 IALS scales. Numeracy data is not comparable between the two surveys because measurement of numeracy in IALSS was expanded to incorporate a broader, more inclusive measure of mathematical skills and conceptual mathematical knowledge. IALSS also included a fourth skill domain of problem solving.

IALSS Skill Domains

The IALSS definition of literacy accentuates the modern conception of literacy as a continuum of skill development with diverse applications:

> Literacy is using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.[125]

IALSS measures proficiencies in four skill domains:

Prose literacy – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts, such as editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

Document literacy – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including applications, forms, schedules, maps, tables and charts.

Numeracy – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

Problem solving – goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist.

[125] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 55.

NWT IALSS Results

IALSS data reveals levels of literacy in NWT adults even lower than the literacy statistics, which informed the development of the NWT Literacy Strategy in 2000. Using grade nine or less as the metric for low literacy, the Lutra report (2000) states "66% of Aboriginal adults and 31% of non-Aboriginal adults do not have the literacy skills needed for daily living."[126] NWT Legislature Motion 6-14(3), which led to the development of the NWT Literacy Strategy, also uses grade nine or less as the metric for low literacy. The motion cites "15% of adult residents" and "32% of adult residents in the [smaller] communities" as having grade nine or less. The 2003 IALSS data reveals that the percentage of NWT adults below functional literacy (Level 3) is considerably higher than the estimates in the 2000 Lutra report and Motion 6-14(3).

Table 14: Percentage of NWT Adults, 16+, Below Functional Literacy, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Prose Literacy	68.9	29.8
Document Literacy	71.0	30.1
Numeracy	75.8	38.5
Problem Solving	91.5	59.6

In the 21st century workforce, people need functional levels in all skill domains: prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem solving. IALSS has accentuated the seriousness of the NWT's adult literacy problems.

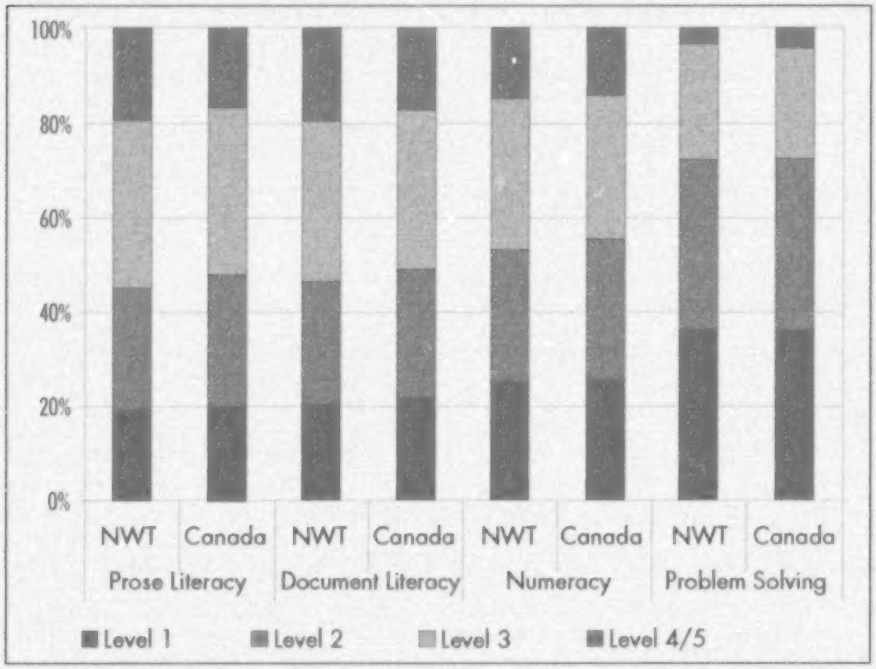
"in the 21st century work force, people need functional levels in all skill domains"

[126] Lutra Associates Ltd. (2000). Making a case for literacy: The state of adult literacy and adult basic education in the NWT.

NWT/Canada Adult Literacy Levels

Overall, the Northwest Territories adult literacy levels are very close to the Canadian average in all skill domains.

Figure 28: Percentage of NWT/Canada Population, 16+, by IALSS Skill Levels[127]



On the surface, it would appear that the NWT does not have a serious literacy problem because, overall, NWT adult literacy levels are on par with the Canadian averages.

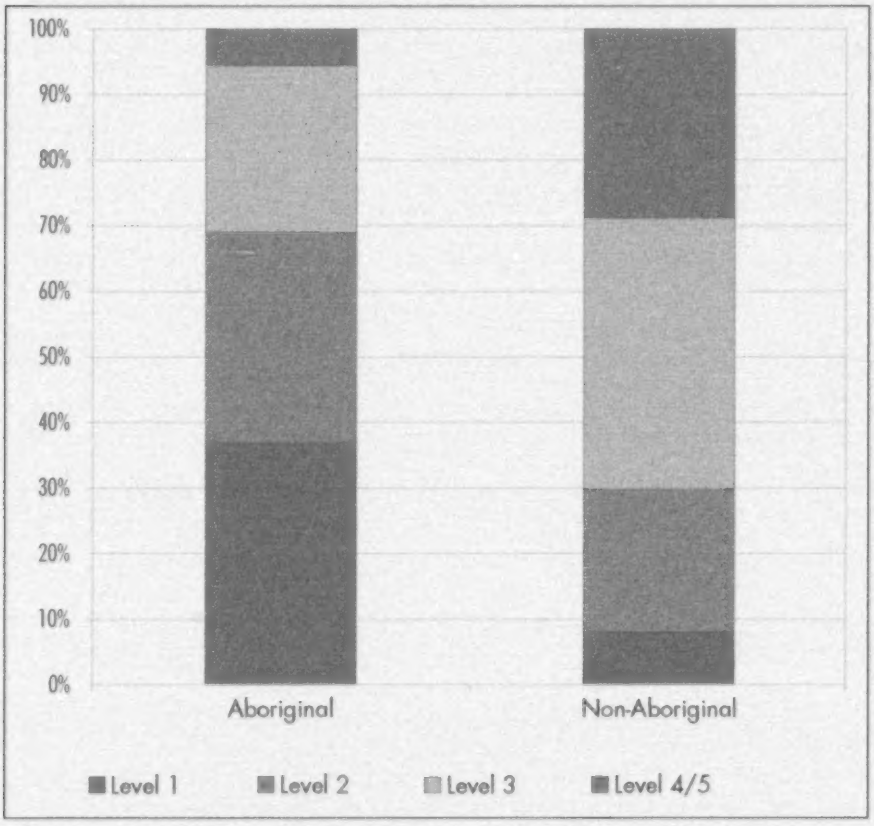
[127] Data for Figure 28 from Table 1.1 of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

NWT Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Adult Literacy Levels

NWT adult literacy statistics reveal that there is a wide discrepancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal literacy levels in every skill domain, in every age group. Non-Aboriginal NWT adults score significantly above Canadian literacy levels, while Aboriginal adults score significantly below Canadian literacy levels.

As Figure 29 shows, 36.9% of NWT Aboriginal adults are at IALSS Level 1 prose proficiency and 32% at IALSS Level 2. In comparison, 8% of NWT non-Aboriginal adults are at Level 1 prose literacy and 21.8% at Level 2. 68.9% of NWT Aboriginal adults are below Level 3 prose literacy, while 70.2% of NWT non-Aboriginal adults are at Level 3 and above.

Figure 29: NWT Prose Literacy, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal[128]

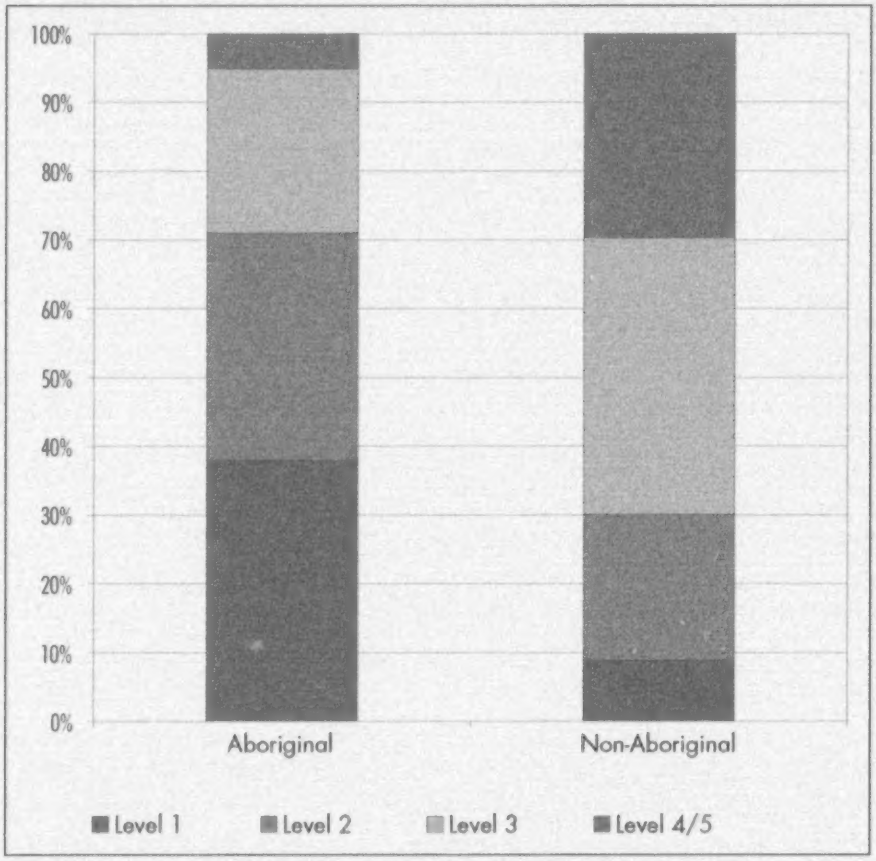


[128] Data for Figures 29 to 32 from Table 2.1 of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

NWT Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal prose literacy distributions are reverse mirror images.

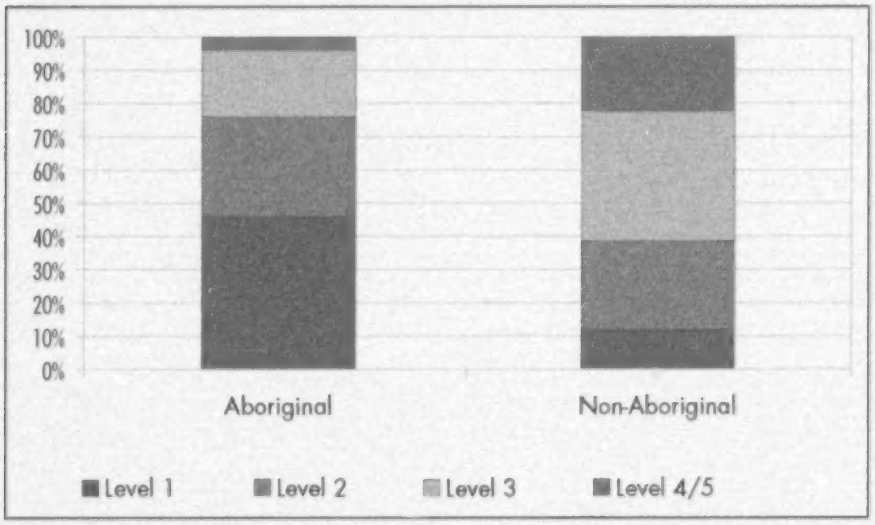
However, skill levels in the other domains are even lower for Aboriginal adults, and the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal divide is even wider. Figure 30 shows that 37.9% of NWT Aboriginal adults are at Level 1 document literacy proficiency and 25.9% are at Level 2. In total, 71% of Aboriginal adults are below Level 3 document literacy, the international standard for functional literacy, compared to 30.1% of non-Aboriginal adults.

Figure 30: NWT Document Literacy, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



Numeracy levels among the NWT adult population pose a greater challenge than prose and document literacy. 75.8% of Aboriginal adults and 38.5% of non-Aboriginal adults are below functional literacy (Level 3) in numeracy. Only 4.1% of Aboriginal adults and 22.4% of non-Aboriginal adults have advanced numeracy skills (Level 4/5),[129] which would be required for many scientific and technical labour market positions.

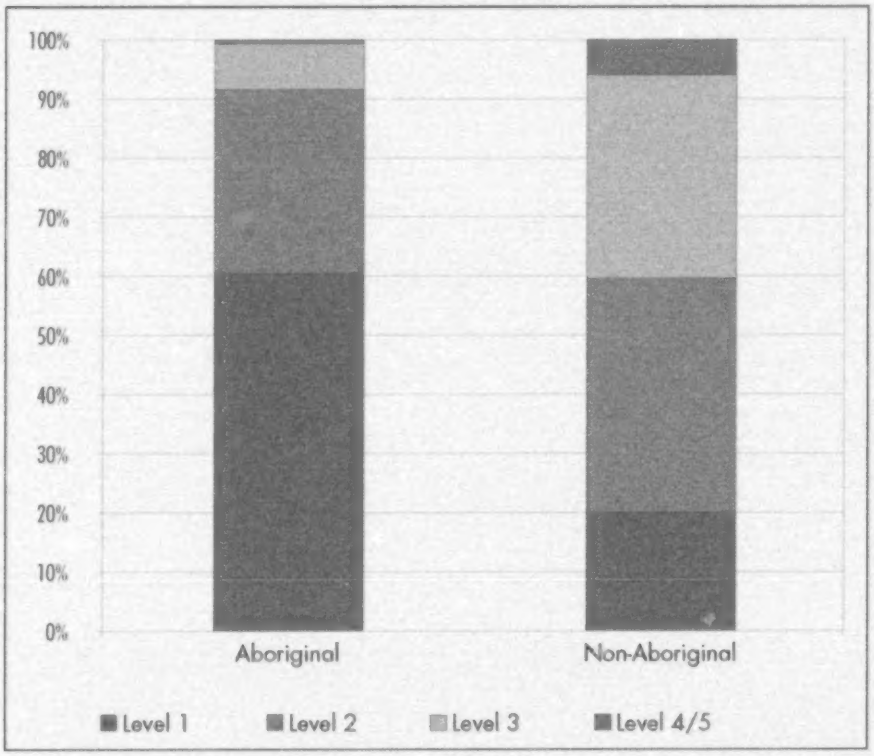
Figure 31: NWT Numeracy, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



[129] Statistics Canada combines Levels 4 and 5 in IALSS data tables because Level 5 adults comprise a very small proportion of the Canadian population.

Because problem solving is a new IALSS skill domain, the international standard for functional literacy has yet to be decided. At Level 1 problem solving, "concrete, limited tasks can be mastered by applying content-related, practical reasoning."[130] At the other end of the spectrum, Level 4 problem solving involves "grasping a system of problem states and possible solutions as a whole" and systematically considering "multiple sequences of action."[131] Only 0.7% of NWT Aboriginal adults and 6% of non-Aboriginal adults have IALSS Level 4 problem solving skills. 60.4% of Aboriginal adults and 20% of non-Aboriginal adults scored at Level 1.

Figure 32: NWT Problem Solving, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



[130] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 83.

[131] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 83.

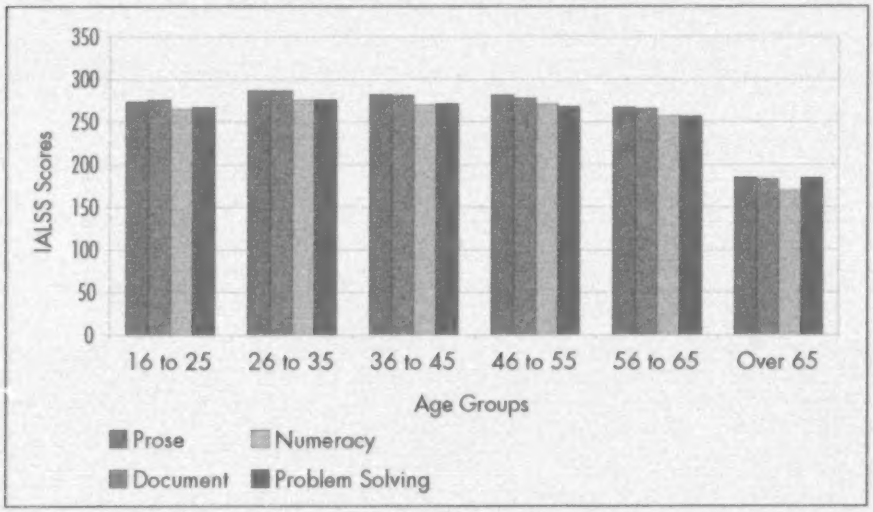
NWT Adult Literacy Levels by Age Group

The NWT IALSS report describes the complex relationship between "age and ability level":

> ...several mechanisms may be at play. On one hand, cognitive performance may diminish as individuals age. On the other hand, performance may be enhanced as individuals age and accumulate experience, knowledge and skills. (14)

In the NWT, adults aged 26 to 35 years have the highest overall scores in all four IALSS skill domains. This pattern is common to most Canadian jurisdictions and to Canada as a whole, but the score gaps between this age group and the two age groups over 55 are wider in the NWT.

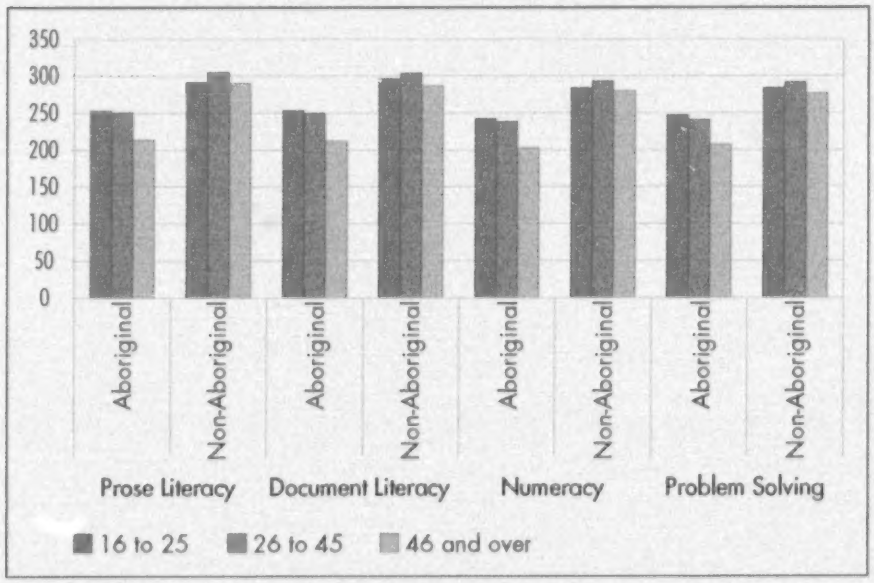
Figure 33: NWT Average Proficiency Scores by Age Group[132]



[132] Data for Figures 33 to 34 from Table 2.2 of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

Across all age groups, literacy scores are lower for NWT Aboriginal adults. The Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal literacy skills divide is more pronounced with adults over 45, but discrepancies exist at every age level in every skill domain. NWT Aboriginal adults, aged 16 to 25, have higher scores than other Aboriginal age groups. Non-Aboriginal NWT adults, aged 26 to 45, have higher skill levels than the 16 to 25 age group. This pattern is distinct from the rest of Canada.

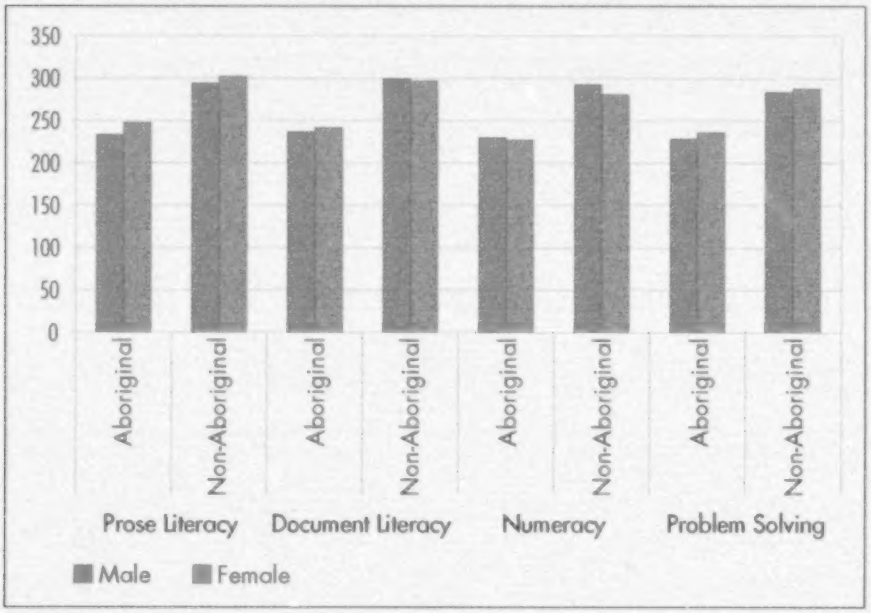
Figure 34: NWT Average Proficiency Scores by Age Group, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



NWT Adult Literacy Levels by Gender

IALSS reveals that NWT Aboriginal males have the greatest skills deficiencies in prose literacy, document literacy and problem solving. Non-Aboriginal females have the highest prose literacy and problem solving scores. Non-Aboriginal females have a mean prose literacy score of 302, compared to 294 for non-Aboriginal males. Aboriginal females have a mean prose literacy score of 248, compared to 234 for Aboriginal males. NWT males have higher numeracy scores than females. The mean numeracy score is 230 for Aboriginal males, compared to 227 for Aboriginal females and 293 for non-Aboriginal males, compared to 281 for non-Aboriginal females.

Figure 35: Average Proficiency Scores of NWT Adults, 16+, by Gender, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal[133]



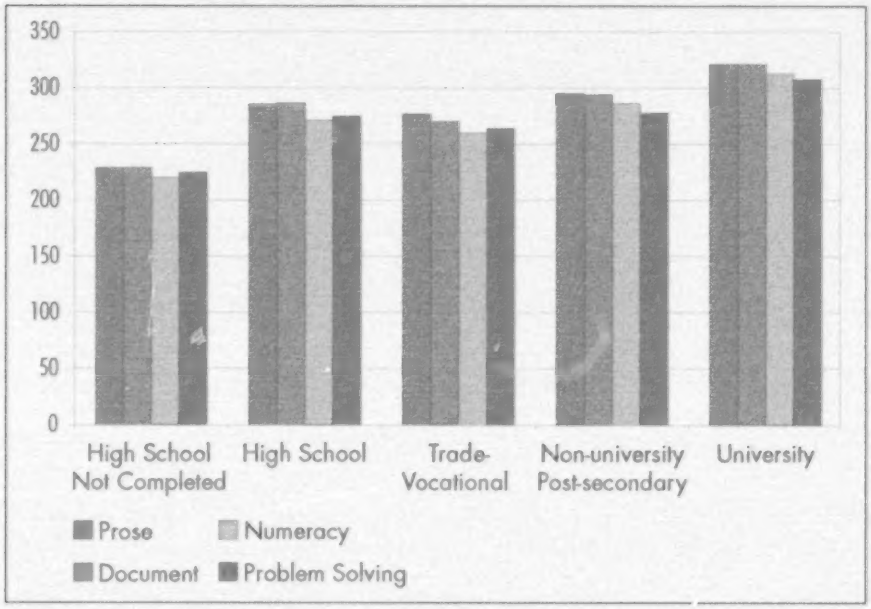
[133] Data for Figure 35 from Table 2.3 of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

NWT Adult Literacy Levels by Educational Attainment

IALSS found a strong relationship between levels of education and literacy skills in the NWT:

> **Those with university degrees score significantly higher in all four skill domains than those with less than high school, and, furthermore, those with less than high school have lower average scores than individuals at all other levels of education.[134]**

Figure 36: NWT Average Proficiency Scores by Educational Attainment, 16+[135]



[134] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 23.

[135] Data for Figures 36 to 37 from Table 1.4a of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

The NWT mirrored the pattern of higher literacy scores for higher levels of educational attainment found in the rest of Canada – with some notable exceptions:

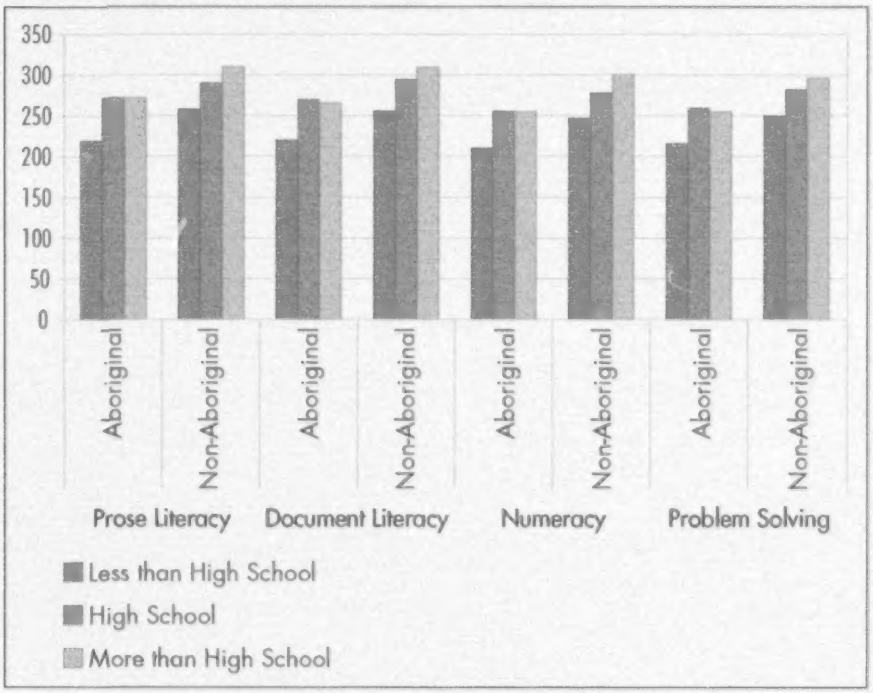
- University graduates in the Northwest Territories performed better than those with similar education in Canada overall.
- In all four domains, more university graduates in the Northwest Territories perform at or above Level 3 than in Canada overall.
- The average score differences between highly educated individuals and those with low levels of education are significant in the Northwest Territories, and the gap between the two groups is significantly greater than the national average in all four domains.
- Overall, a higher proportion of university graduates in the Northwest Territories score at higher levels of proficiency than the rest of the country.[136]

NWT adults at higher levels of educational attainment have higher skill proficiency levels than adults at analogous levels of education in the rest of Canada, but the skills gap associated with educational attainment is also wider in the NWT.

IALSS data reveals higher skill levels at higher levels of education for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults.

[136] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). pp. 23-24.

Figure 37: NWT Average Proficiency Scores by Educational Attainment, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



The positive relationship between levels of educational attainment and proficiency holds for NWT Aboriginal adults and non-Aboriginal adults. However, there are notable differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NWT adults at the lowest levels of education:

> ...the average score for the Aboriginal population with less than high school corresponds to Level 1 proficiency, while the average score is at Level 2 for the non-Aboriginal population without a high school diploma.[137]

[137] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 48.

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IALSS also notes a similar proficiency gap between NWT Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults with more than high school:

> The Aboriginal population with more than high school obtained the average score of Level 2 proficiency, while the average score for the non-Aboriginal population with more than high school is at Level 3.[138]

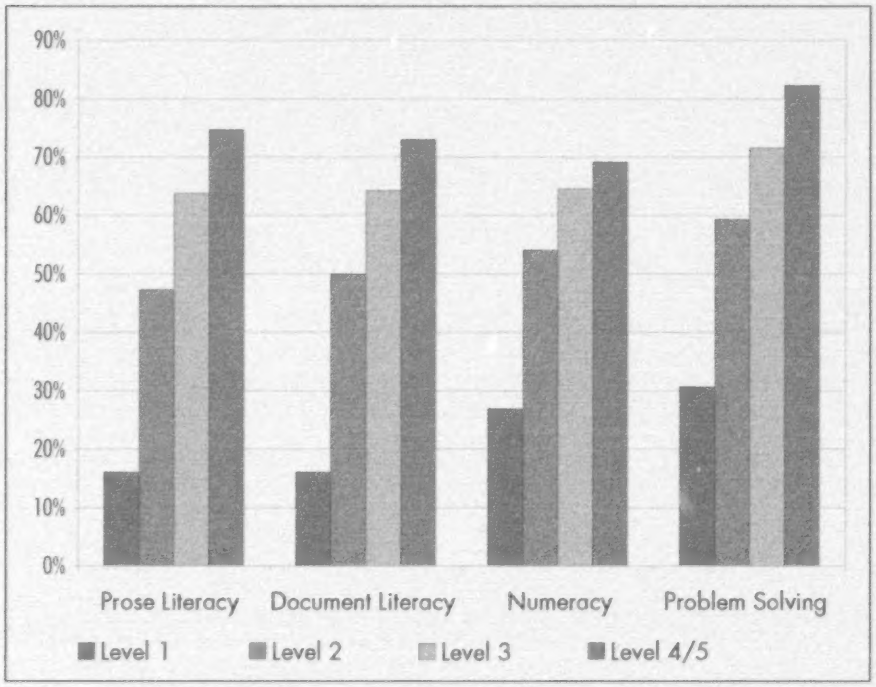
It should be noted that the NWT IALSS report does not break "more than high school" educational attainment down into subcategories. The specific composition of adults with more than high school is also not given, so we do not know what percentage has trades-vocational, non-university postsecondary and university degrees. Thus, it is not possible to compare NWT Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal adult skill proficiencies for specific levels of education.

[138] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 48.

Educational Participation of NWT Adults

IALSS data on NWT adult participation in training shows that a very small percentage of low literacy adults are participating in adult education and training.

Figure 38: Percentage of NWT Adults, 16 to 65, Receiving Adult Education and Training in 12 Months Preceding IALSS Testing[139]



The IALSS definition of adult education and training is a combination of informal learning (lectures, workshops, reading reference books and manuals and using audio-visual resources to learn)[140] and formal training with courses and programs of study. IALSS data on educational participation shows that NWT Level 4/5 adults are most likely to have a lifelong learning perspective and access opportunities to further increase their skills. NWT Level 1 adults, who need skills training the most, access training opportunities the least.

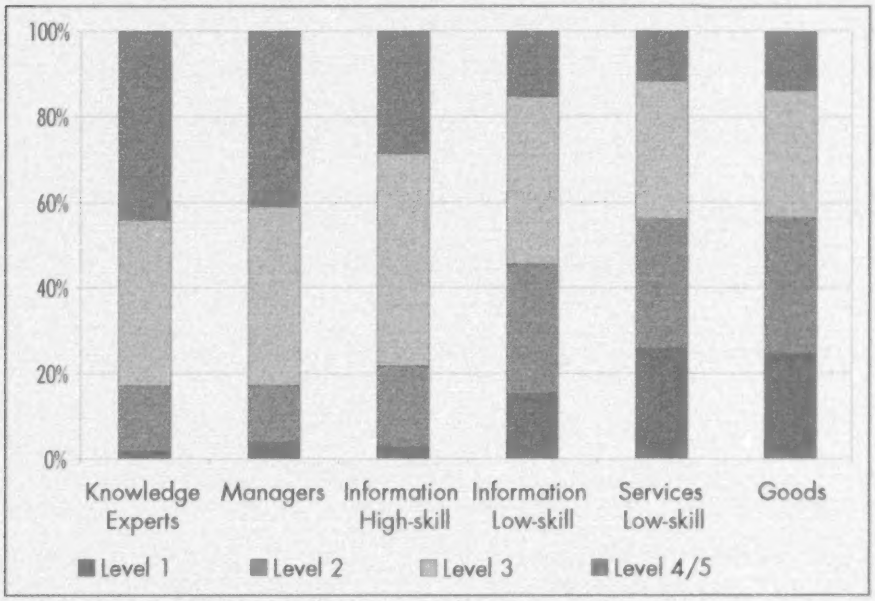
[139] Data for Figure 38 from Table 1.9b of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

[140] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 36.

Occupational Categories of NWT Adults

The NWT IALSS report emphasizes the increasing skill demands created by the knowledge economy: "Knowledge-intensive occupations increasingly demand the application of higher levels of competencies."[141] The expansion of the knowledge economy limits the occupational choices of NWT adults below functional literacy (Level 3).

Figure 39: Percentage of NWT Adults, 16 to 65, in Occupational Categories by Prose Literacy Levels[142]



Knowledge intensive occupations – knowledge experts, manager and high-skill information – have very high percentages of NWT adults at Level 3 prose literacy and above. 82.9% of knowledge experts, 82.9% of managers and 78.2% of high-skill information jobs are staffed with NWT adults at Level 3 and above. In contrast, Level 1 and 2 NWT adults are concentrated in jobs that are not knowledge intensive – low-skill information, low-skill services and goods. 45.5% of low-skill information, 56% of low-skill service and 56.4% of goods jobs are staffed with NWT adults at Level 1 and 2 prose literacy.

[141] Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003. (2006). p. 28.

[142] Data for Figure 39 from Table 1.6b of Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003.

Appendix C:
Report Card on Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005

Introduction

In January 2001, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) approved Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005. This approval included the allocation of an additional $2.4 million annually for literacy initiatives in the NWT. Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was developed in consultation with the Social Envelope departments and other GNWT departments and agencies.

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was both comprehensive and complex. It was comprehensive in that it covered the spectrum of lifelong learning from early childhood to seniors. It was complex in that it encompassed four over-arching goals, 27 different objectives, 55 activities and 72 separate programs/initiatives. The Literacy Strategy was also complex in that it encompassed activities from the following different funding sources:

- New funding in the amount of $2.4 million annually to fill gaps in adult literacy programs (primarily English language programs and some programming in the official languages);
- Funding for literacy activities from complementary strategies, including The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Initiative and the NWT Aboriginal Languages Strategy – Revitalizing, Enhancing and Promoting Aboriginal Languages; and
- Funding from existing programs.

One of the commitments made within Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was the development of an "effective accountability framework to provide timely and accurate results measurement and evaluation" so that progress on Strategy activities could be measured. That framework was developed in 2002 and 2003. Specifically, it was a results-based management and accountability framework (RMAF). The RMAF is the de facto standard for evaluation and accountability in Canada. It included a program delivery profile, a program logic model, an ongoing performance measurement strategy, an evaluation strategy and a reporting strategy.

A summative evaluation, using the RMAF, assessed the lessons learned from five years of literacy programming (from fiscal 2001-2002 to 2005-2006). In 2006-2007, the summative evaluation was jointly conducted by Northern Research and Evaluation, Nella Educational Consulting and J. Carey Consulting: Evaluation Plus. Due to the detailed nature of the summative evaluation, both technical and summary reports were prepared. The summary report is intended for a more general audience. Stakeholders who want to review detailed information on the evaluation results should view the separate technical report.

Background

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 definition of literacy:

> Literacy is an individual's ability to listen, speak, read, write, view, represent, compute and solve problems in one or more of the NWT official languages at levels of proficiency necessary to function in the family, in the community and on the job.

The following four goals formed the foundation of the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework 2001-2005:

1. Increase the number of people in the NWT who are literate.
2. Increase awareness of the importance of literacy in the official languages of the NWT.
3. Ensure government departments work together to increase literacy levels in the NWT.
4. Develop literacy partnerships across society.

Consultations highlighted the need for carefully described actions to support these goals. Overall, a total of 27 objectives were developed to address the four goals. The objectives provided a framework within which progress could be measured over time.

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 encompassed eight key areas:

1. Early Childhood
2. School Age Children and Youth
3. Working Age Youth and Adults
4. Seniors
5. Community Literacy Services
6. Official Languages
7. GNWT Departments
8. Literacy Partnerships

The first five areas corresponded to the five target groups contained under Goal #1, while the three remaining areas corresponded to Goals #2, #3 and #4 (respectively). Because Goal #1 was so broad, sub-goals were developed for each of the five areas contained under it.

While ECE had the lead role in administering the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005, the various program partners were also responsible for implementation of many of the Strategy's activities as program providers or through participation on Strategy committees. Some of those program partners included Aurora College, the NWT Literacy Council, the NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities, the NWT Seniors Society, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, various GNWT Departments, the NWT Workplace Education Committee, the Literacy Programs and Services for Seniors Committee, and the Learning Support for Persons with Disabilities Committee.

The RMAF for the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was designed to describe how data was to be collected and analyzed to answer three important evaluation issues for each of the eight areas:

1. Relevance – Was the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 consistent with ECE and GNWT priorities and did it realistically address an actual need?
2. Success – Was the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 effective in meeting its intended outcomes and without unwanted negative outcomes? Was progress being made towards the achievement of the four goals of the Strategy?
3. Cost effectiveness – Was the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 an appropriate and efficient means to achieve outcomes, relative to the alternatives?

This report card on Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 will highlight the successes, challenges and recommendations that have helped guide the GNWT Literacy Strategy renewal for 2008-2018.[143]

[143] For more detail, cf. NWT Literacy Strategy summative evaluation: Summary report (2007) and NWT Literacy Strategy summative evaluation: Technical report (2007).

Successes

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation: Summary Report highlighted a number of successes from Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005.

Awareness

The evaluation results confirmed that one of the most important benefits of the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was in raising the awareness of literacy issues across the NWT. Prior to the Strategy's release, literacy was not a political or socio-economic priority in the NWT, and, since its release, it is now part of the mainstream political agenda. Specific activities regarding promotion and reporting on the Strategy have also helped, including the annual reports prepared for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, the Interim Evaluation of the Strategy, the promotion of annual Literacy Week activities by ECE and the promotional work undertaken by the NWT Literacy Council.

Literacy Programming and Resources

The investment of approximately $2 million per year was a significant achievement for literacy initiatives in the NWT. Prior to that investment, funding was haphazard and inconsistent (and project-based only). With the advent of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 funding, there were dedicated sources of monies that could be used to promote literacy programming across the territories. Programming was significantly increased in the Early Childhood, Adult and Seniors key areas. Additionally, many literacy resources were developed in the Early Childhood, Official Languages (particularly Aboriginal languages resources) and the GNWT Departments key areas (including the Plain Language Audit Tool and Booklet).

Capacity

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 has helped increase capacity within the NWT-wide literacy system. This included both training community members so that they can then provide grassroots support to literacy programming (through the Northern Parenting and Literacy Program) and providing plain language training to GNWT employees.

Research

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 facilitated significant research on literacy issues in the NWT. Some of the more important research included International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), the Seniors Literacy Needs Assessment, the Best Practices Framework and literacy from an Aboriginal languages perspective (undertaken by the NWT Literacy Council).

Aboriginal Languages Literacy

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 improved Aboriginal Languages literacy in both the Early Childhood and Official Languages key areas. The Aboriginal Languages Literacy program and the Language Nests program were key contributors to those improvements.

Challenges

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation: Summary Report highlighted a number of challenges that were encountered in Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005.

Funding

One benefit of the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was its ambitious nature (examining literacy from a "cradle to grave" perspective). However, most stakeholders felt that the resources dedicated were insufficient to achieve the desired results. For example, while approximately $2 million per year was a substantial investment, it was not enough to achieve significant positive outcomes for the entire spectrum that the Strategy covered – early childhood, school-age children, working-age youth and adults, and seniors.

Stakeholders were also concerned that many of the sections of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 were unfunded and had to make do with existing programming resources. For example, funding was not included for a GNWT Literacy Strategy Coordinator (and those duties were assumed by an existing position within ECE). Not having a dedicated coordinator for the first five years of implementation limited progress on Strategy activities. Although many successes were reported through those first five years, many stakeholders indicated that there would have been even more success had there been a dedicated coordinator.

Finally, some stakeholders noted the funding allocations were too rigid and that there were too many separate pots of money that were difficult to access (and that funding could not be easily moved between those separate pots). Although some progress was made with the development of the Community Literacy Development Fund, stakeholders still felt the funding process was not flexible enough to properly meet program needs.

Staff Turnover

As noted above, there was no dedicated Literacy Strategy Coordinator, and those duties instead fell to the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) Coordinator, who already had full-time duties. Two different people filled that position during the first five years of the Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005. As well, during that time period, the ALBE Coordinator position was vacant for approximately a nine-month period. This contributed to funding going unspent and activities not being completed. Staff turnover was also an issue within such key areas as Early Childhood and K-12 and led to other problems (including communication gaps and coordination challenges).

Communication

Communication regarding the various activities of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 has proved problematic. Due to the sheer size and complex nature of the Strategy, it was difficult to continually keep every partner in the loop regarding every Strategy activity. The lack of a central authority for the entire Strategy added to these communication woes, which were exacerbated by the staffing difficulties outlined above. The first two annual reports on Strategy activities were well received by stakeholders. However, annual reports were not completed for the final three years of this evaluation period, with the result that a valuable communication tool was under-utilized.

Coordination

Coordination of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 has also proved extremely challenging. The workload to coordinate this GNWT-wide Strategy was significant in and of itself. The turnover issue (outlined above) also hampered coordination efforts. Additionally, many activities, including many of the committees in the Adult, Seniors, GNWT Departments and Partnerships key areas, were not sustainable given budget and human resource constraints (which further compromised coordination efforts).

Data Collection and Reporting

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 was a very complex undertaking, with significant reporting and accountability provisions. A full RMAF was developed for the Strategy in 2003-2004. While this was a very positive step in and of itself, it was not as truly useful as it could have been because it was developed from a headquarters perspective and because it was not fully implemented. Orientation and follow-up regarding RMAF data collection roles and responsibilities would have been beneficial.

Additionally, because that RMAF was based on the first iteration of evaluation and accountability guidelines developed by the Government of Canada, it had its share of problems – the most important of which was that it was unrealistic and administratively burdensome to collect all of the data and report on the numerous output and outcome indicators on an annual basis.

Likewise, for many Literacy Strategy activities, no formal mechanisms were developed to track program activity, which further compromised the usefulness of the RMAF. Many stakeholders also reported confusion surrounding other interlinking strategies (such as the Aboriginal Languages Strategy, the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy) and how those fit into Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005.

Finally, many stakeholders noted that literacy issues are complex and their solutions are long-term in nature, which made it difficult to measure outcomes (such as those desired for NWT Literacy Strategy Goal #1) in the short term.

Commitment

Findings from two of the key areas indicated that there was a need for greater commitment to the GNWT-wide Literacy Strategy from senior management within the GNWT. This was specifically evident within both the GNWT Departments and Literacy Partnerships key areas. Without a high level of commitment from senior management, a number of literacy activities were not given the priority they should have and, thus, were not completed.

There were also a couple of issues that had a mixed impact (both positive and negative). These included partnerships and the use of dedicated coordinators.

Partnerships

The development of partnerships has been an important success of Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005. Numerous partnerships, including many between key organizations such as ECE, Aurora College and the NWT Literacy Council, have been developed through the implementation of Strategy activities. And these partnerships were effective in both developing and delivering literacy programming across the NWT.

However, the findings from several of the Strategy key areas showed that many of the partnerships were not successful for a variety of reasons, including using volunteer coordinators, staff turnover within key positions, and poor communication and coordination. This was particularly true in the Seniors, GNWT Departments and Partnerships areas.

Dedicated Coordinators

Findings from three of the key areas showed that where programs had dedicated coordinators, they were successful. Examples included coordination of various projects within the Early Childhood key area and coordination of the Aboriginal Languages literacy within the Official Languages key area. Programs which used volunteer coordinators, as in the Virtual Libraries project of the Community Literacy Services key area, or which had existing staff assume

additional duties to their already heavy workloads, as with the coordinator for the Interdepartmental Literacy Committee within the GNWT Departments key area, were not as successful.

Recommendations

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation: Summary Report made eight recommendations based on stakeholder feedback and research findings. These recommendations have guided the GNWT Literacy Strategy renewal for 2008-2018. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has followed up on the NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation recommendations.

Recommendation #1:

Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005 addressed the past five fiscal years and it is now appropriate to update that Strategy to reflect current needs and new political realities. An update of the Strategy should focus on the results gathered through the NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation effort as well as the valuable information identified through the NWT's participation in the 2003 IALSS. Updating the Strategy will ensure that measures developed specific to adult literacy will build from the baseline data generated by the IALSS and address the lessons learned over the first five years of the Strategy's implementation.

ECE actions:

- Prepared in-depth report, which correlated IALSS data with 2000 NWT Literacy Strategy.
- Distributed IALSS report and NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation to Literacy Strategy Renewal Working Group in advance of October 2007 meeting.
- Held sessions during October Literacy Strategy meetings in which group responded to NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation recommendations and the recommendations arising from the IALSS data.
- Held public presentation in November 2007 to share key results from NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation and IALSS data.
- Drafted IALSS appendix for new Literacy Strategy.

Recommendation #2:

The NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation effort identifies a clear need to dedicate funding for a full-time GNWT Literacy Strategy Coordinator. This coordinator must be in place to oversee Literacy Strategy activities, and should be in addition to the dedicated funding for a full-time ALBE Coordinator.

ECE actions:

- Developed job description for Literacy Strategy Coordinator.
- New projects, no off-loading of current staff responsibilities.
- Literacy Strategy Coordinator has been hired.

Recommendation #3:

Ensure that the next version of the GNWT Literacy Strategy takes a more targeted approach. The Strategy should focus on making significant positive accomplishments in a few key areas, rather than spreading resources thinly across a wide spectrum of activities.

ECE actions:

- Decision to maintain comprehensive approach to literacy.
- Target areas emerging from working group meetings are youth literacy, adult literacy and Aboriginal language literacy.
- Specific objectives and actions have been prioritized into three-year blocks over the life span of the new Literacy Strategy.

Recommendation #4:

Ensure that the goals and objectives of the new GNWT Literacy Strategy are designed realistically. These goals and objectives must be measurable, not administratively burdensome to collect for, and reflect true reporting accountabilities. Evaluation expertise should be used in the development of these goals and objectives. As well, the Strategy should only contain activities that are funded (i.e. no interlinking strategies or initiatives should be included).

ECE actions:

- ECE evaluation expert on Literacy Strategy Renewal Working Group.
- New Literacy Strategy includes objectives and actions that address the need for evaluation instruments and processes.
- Literacy Strategy evaluation contractors facilitated two-day meeting to gather input from Literacy Strategy Renewal Working Group in April 2008.
- Literacy Strategy accountability framework and evaluation plan was developed concurrently with finalization of the Literacy Strategy to ensure that goals, objectives and actions will be measurable.

Recommendation #5:

Adopt a multi-year funding approach for the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy – one that filters down to the project/program level so that they reap the benefits of longer term planning and consistency. This multi-year approach will also signify to key stakeholders that addressing literacy needs cannot be accomplished through short-term or quick fixes.

ECE actions:

- Multi-year funding arrangements will be put in place for organizations that meet the Literacy Strategy accountability criteria.

Recommendation #6:

Data collection systems must reflect and address the issues caused by multiple partners spread across a decentralized system. To mitigate these issues, ensure that a new evaluation framework (or RMAF) is designed and properly implemented for the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy, and that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding data collection and reporting. In doing so, formal data collection and reporting requirements should be implemented where none currently exist, and those systems where the data is being collected and not used should be streamlined. Ideally, the data that is collected should be synthesized and analyzed on an annual basis (i.e. an annual report) to ensure that Strategy activities stay on target.

ECE actions:

- Evaluation team developed new Literacy Strategy RMAF.
- Data collection is written into the job description of the Literacy Strategy Coordinator, who will be communicating data collection needs to literacy services providers and stakeholders.
- Literacy Strategy Coordinator will also provide training on data collection when required.
- Literacy Strategy Coordinator will oversee synthesis of annual Literacy Strategy data.

Recommendation #7:

Design and implement a new communications plan that supports the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy. In doing so, develop orientation materials and backup plans, which can be used to address the turnover of personnel within Strategy key areas. Communication must also be ongoing and consistent among all key stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the entire Strategy.

ECE actions:

- Literacy Strategy communications plan written into Literacy Strategy Coordinator job description.
- Literacy Strategy Coordinator will design and implement communications plan.

Recommendation #8:

Ensure that Literacy Strategy partners play an active role in the design and delivery of the new Strategy in order to solicit their buy-in. These partners must have formalized decision-making roles and responsibilities that will impact the implementation and direction of the Strategy.

ECE actions:

- Established multi-stakeholder Literacy Strategy Renewal Working Group to draft new Literacy Strategy.
- Will establish a multi-stakeholder Literacy Strategy Advisory Committee for the duration of the Literacy Strategy.
- The Literacy Strategy Advisory Committee will include some members of the Literacy Strategy Renewal Working Group as well as additional regional and sectoral representation.

REFERENCES

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Glossary

Aboriginal
In Canada, of or relating to First Nations, Métis or Inuit people. In the context of the Literacy Strategy, refers to individuals in the NWT claiming Cree, Dene, Métis or Inuit Status.

Aboriginal Language Community
A group of people sharing a common Aboriginal language.

Accountability
An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions; often used when talking about public funding.

Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE)
Adult Literacy and Basic Education provides students with the equivalent of grade one to 12 course requirements necessary to enter postsecondary or trades programs. Adult Literacy and Basic Education courses include levels 110 to 160 in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies as well as computer studies and career planning courses.

Andragogy
The art and science of teaching adults; strategies for teaching adults.

Best Practices
The key aspects needed for effective programs. These practices can be used as guides for program planning, as a framework to improve and ensure practices are effective and as a central goal to work towards.

Bilingualism
The ability to write or speak in two different languages.

Bridging Program
A program of study involving courses designed specifically to provide individuals with skills and knowledge required for entry into an occupation or a higher-level education institution.

Community-based
Located in the community; specially developed according to the identified needs of the community.

Community Language Plan
Each Aboriginal language community develops and implements language revitalization, promotion, maintenance and enhancement activities in accordance with its strategic language plan, which identifies what will be achieved, how it will be accomplished and how success will be measured.

Community Literacy Plan
A community-generated set of actions designed to address local literacy needs.

Community Development
A long-term process that builds on existing strengths in a community and involves local people in designing and making change.

Deficit-based Model
Literacy programs that follow this model are designed by experts and tend to ignore the diverse cultures, genders and ages of people. This model uses a "needs assessment" to determine what a community is lacking and what it needs.

Distance Education
Instruction characterized by quasi-permanent separation of teacher and student during the learning process. There is use of technical media to unite teacher and learner and transmit educational content.

Ethnicity
Refers to an individual's affiliation with a distinct group of people who share a common linguistic and cultural heritage (e.g. Inuit, Dene, Métis).

Embedded Literacy
Incorporating literacy and numeracy instruction into practical skills-based activities, such as cooking, sewing or snowmobile repair.

Emergent Literacy
The initial stages of learning to read and write; what individuals know about reading and writing before they actually can read and write; the developing knowledge individuals possess of words and text before going to school.

Employment Rate
The percentage of persons in a population, 15 years of age and over, who are employed.

Family Literacy
The many ways families develop and use literacy skills to accomplish day-to-day tasks and activities. Reading as a family has many benefits that include better performance in school by children and adult success in finding and keeping jobs.

Formal Education
The hierarchically structured, chronologically graded education system, running from primary school through to university, including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training. (UNESCO)

Functional Literacy
The international standard for functional literacy is IALSS Level 3; considered the desired threshold for the ever-changing knowledge-based economy.

Gross Domestic Product
The value of all services and goods produced in a year within Canada's borders measured at market prices.

Health Literacy
The ability of individuals to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services so they can in turn make educated health decisions.

Holistic
Broad-based learning and instruction that involves the whole person; not restricted to academic learning.

IALSS Skills Domains
The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey measures proficiency in four domains:

- Prose literacy – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts, such as editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.
- Document literacy – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including applications, forms, schedules, maps, tables and charts.
- Numeracy – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.
- Problem solving – goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist.

Informal Education
The truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media. (UNESCO)

Immersion
A program where more than 50% of the instruction is in a foreign language for students being taught.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
Technologies used to gather, process, analyze and store information.

Information Processing Skills
The ability to locate and collect relevant information, to sort, classify, sequence, compare and contrast, and to analyze part/whole relationships.

Intellectual Property Rights
Rights granted to creators and owners of works that are the result of human intellectual creativity. These works can be in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic domains.

Interagency Group
A multi-stakeholder community group that addresses a variety of social issues, including literacy.

Knowledge Economy
An economy based on intellectual skills, knowledge and technology.

Knowledge-intensive Occupation
A rapidly growing sector that includes jobs like accountants, lawyers, doctors and mathematicians. Usually, these jobs employ people with IALSS Level 3 literacy or higher.

Language Acquisition
The process of acquiring human speech, whether it is a person's first language or a language learned later in life.

Language Communities
A community of people who trace their heritage to speakers of a particular language, whether or not they speak that language themselves.

Language Nests
A widely successful program originating in New Zealand with the Maori people, creating cultural and language immersion centres for pre-schoolers and their parents. The program's central goal is to preserve a culture and encourage use of a traditional language in the everyday life of a family.

Learner Assessment
Tools used to monitor a learner's progress towards specified learning outcomes.

Learning Barriers
A range of personal and systemic challenges that must be overcome in order to learn.

Learner-centred Model
A model in which the instructor models correct and appropriate language use and the student then uses the language in practice activities that simulate real communication situations. In this model, both the student and teacher are active participants who equally share the responsibility of the student's learning.

Literacy/Numeracy Coach
A teacher who provides job-embedded, context-specific, ongoing support to teachers and students. Literacy/numeracy coaches and teachers work together to improve instructional practice in order to raise student achievement.

Mother Tongue
The first language or dialect spoken by a person in early childhood. The language is passed on through generations from the elders to the children and does not always remain the language of choice for children as they grow up.

Non-Aboriginal
Individuals in the NWT not claiming Cree, Dene, Métis or Inuit heritage and status.

Non-academic Outcomes
Personal and social benefits from a course of study: i.e. improved self-esteem, healthier living.

Non-formal Education
Any organized educational activity outside the established formal system, whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity, that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives. (UNESCO)

NWT Senior Secondary School Diploma for Adults
A grade 12 diploma available for adult learners.

Official Languages of NWT

Chipewyan	French	Inuvialuktun
Cree	Gwich'in	North Slavey
Tłı̨chǫ (Dogrib)	Inuinnaqtun	South Slavey
English	Inukitiut	

Participation Rate
The percentage of a population, 15 years of age and over, whom is in the labour force.

Placement Package
A variety of assessment instruments used to determine an appropriate level of study for learners.

Plain Language
The use of straightforward words and simple sentence structure in a body of text to ensure there is no misunderstanding or confusion about the information.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)
The assessment and recognition of individuals' previous learning, including credit and non-credit courses and formal, informal and non-formal learning.

Professional Development
Studies completed by individuals to enhance knowledge and skills in their fields of practice.

Proficiency
A specific skill level for a particular task.

Program
A plan of activities for achieving something; the development of activities, often in a carefully planned sequence, that will improve literacy knowledge and skills.

RMAF (Results-based Management and Accountability Framework)
The de facto standard for evaluation and accountability in Canada.

Secondary Migration
The final or actual destination of immigrants to Canada, which often differs from their initial point of arrival and their intended settlement.

Special Needs
Physical, social, emotional or mental needs that may require a learner to have additional supports to access equal educational opportunities.

Strengths-based Model
A model looking at literacy in a way that stresses that people have a right to live according to their culture's values and customs. The model assumes that everyone has strengths in certain knowledge areas that others may not have. This model is used frequently with adult education and community development.

Supports
Resources and services, such as equipment, training, specialized instruction, student housing and daycare, to help meet learner's needs.

Technology-intensive Occupations
Jobs that require knowledge of computers and technology as a whole. Jobs focused in this area are increasing as technology becomes more complex.

Traditional Language Learning
The natural progression of language acquisition in meaningful authentic cultural contexts.

Upskilling
Increasing the skills of workers. As jobs become more technical, many employees are required to get additional training to allow mobility in the workplace.

Workplace Essential Skills

Foundational skills needed in order to learn all other possible skills. Essential skills are particularly important in the workplace as they ensure everyone is capable to do the work needed.

The nine essential skills:

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use
- Continuous Learning

Workplace Readiness Programs

Instruction in essential skills, workplace behaviour and professionalism.

Acronyms

ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ALL	Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey
CAED	Certificate in Adult Education
CARA	Canadian Adult Reading Assessment
CCL	Canadian Council on Learning
CLC	Community Learning Centre
DEA	District Education Authority
DEC	Divisional Education Council
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CLBA	Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Department of Education, Culture and Employment
ELA	English Language Arts
ELT	Enhanced Language Training
ESL	English as a Second Language
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories

FGL	Functional Grade Level
HRSDC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Prior to February 2006: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
H&SS	Health and Social Services
IALSS	International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey
ICTs	Information and Communications Technologies
ISAP	Integration, Settlement and Adaptation Program
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
UCEP	University/College Entrance Preparation program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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